

THE GIRL WAS MINE



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Chapter One

Nancy Wanja looked through the open window of room 106 of University of Nairobi's Hall Nine and inhaled the sweet scent from the flowers on the balcony. She liked the smell of the flowers and for some strange reason ingrained within her, she could sense a romantic quality in it. While her mind concentrated on the fragrance she felt instant arousal as his hand moved gently over her shoulders, and sneaked downwards into her blouse. She felt his smooth fingers caressing her nipples and the pleasure elicited made her shift her gaze from the flowers to a pair of brown sleepy eyes. They were the eyes of Douglas Kamau.

Douglas embraced and kissed her gently on the lips. Full of passion, Nancy held him tightly as waves of desire flooded her whole body. She was totally engulfed in a romantic spell. Douglas teased her breasts while inflaming her lips with ceaseless kisses making Nancy gasp for breath.

Douglas then moved his hand from the breast and placed it on one of the blouse buttons. He unbuttoned it and moved onto the second. Nancy lost in passion, caressed and kissed him as he worked on the last button. Swiftly, he untucked the blouse from the woollen skirt and broke loose of her grip. He slowly removed the blouse and threw it on the reading table, a few inches away. He then ran his hands gently on her tightly held breasts and unfastened her brassiere. He tossed it onto the table. He slowly ran his hands over her skirt and held it at the waist. He pushed it down gently. Nancy kissed him hungrily as Douglas caressed her smooth body and ran his hands towards her lacy pants. He held them at the edge of her waist and pulled them free. He felt the warmth of her thighs and a tinge of desire raced down his spine. When he looked at Nancy, her eyes were misty.

Nancy took over, unbuttoning his shirt and removing it then her hands quickly went for his trouser button and zip. He didn't have his shoes on. He had kicked them off when he entered the room.

As she removed his underwear, his erect penis touched her hand, its warmth igniting more pleasure. They embraced and showered each other

with passionate kisses. They could no longer wait. As the fire consumed them, they jumped into the bed.

Thirty minutes later Nancy pressed the bedside switch and the room shone brightly. The window was still open. A cool breeze blew into the room bringing with it the strong scent of the flowers. She fixed her gaze on Douglas and kissed him gently on the cheek.

"You are wonderful my dear," she said in a soft voice.

Douglas smiled, embraced her.

"It's my first time to make love to a millionaire's daughter," he said as he smiled broadly.

* * * * *

And Douglas was right. It was the first time he had made love to a millionaire's daughter. Unlike Nancy, he was the son of peasant parents and his life from birth, had been characterised by squalor. On August 17th, 1970 an agonising cry of pain rent the air in Witeithie village, a dirt-infested slum, that was the product of the acute poverty which afflicted some sectors of the population after Kenya rid itself of colonial rule. The British policy of stripping Africans of their land resulted in mass lawlessness among the citizens and when the Black government took over power, this problem was a great force to reckon with. The government did everything within its power to resettle the landless, mainly through land buying schemes. However, some people still remained landless. These people earned the name "squatters." But they too had to live and they invaded parts of the country erecting shacks which they called home. This is how Witeithie village came into existence, located on the western side of Ngong town several kilometres from Nairobi.

As the agonising wail cut through the night for the fourth time, a woman laying in bed in one of the houses cocked her ears to trace its source. She was sure it was not far away. Another murder? The question rang in her mind. For the last five years since the birth of Witeithie, violent crime had become part of life. Waking up in the morning and stumbling on a dead man in the bushes was as common as stepping on an ant.

She waited a few more seconds and a different thought struck her. Was it Jennifer, her next door neighbour who was heavy with child? Could she be experiencing labour pains? She thought deeply. She slowly felt for the match box on the wooden table, using her hand. She then struck a match and lit the kerosene lantern dressed quickly and took a penknife from under her pillow. It was not strange for her to be armed. In Witeithie village personal security was paramount. One could not just walk out of the house at night without some weapon. In Witeithie, women were as violent as men. It was only skirts that differentiated them.

As she left the shack and closed the door behind her, she looked at all sides and paused to let her eyes get used to the darkness. When she was sure no one was lurking in the darkness she stole her way quietly into the next shack where she was now sure the cry was coming from.

"Jennifer," she called as she stood by the window of what she knew to be the bedroom.

Jennifer paused in her cries but did not utter a word. She seemed to be figuring out who was calling her name. Even in pain she still had to be careful.

"It's me, Wangeci. Open the door," the woman said.

"Push the door," Jennifer said in a pained tone.

Wangeci was surprised. How could Jennifer have left the door open at such a time of night? She pushed the door gently and it opened faintly. She squeezed herself in, then lit a match to make out the bedroom. It was separated from the living room by a thin sheet of cloth which she pushed aside and lit a kerosene lamp atop a small table near Jennifer's bed.

Jennifer lay on a simple bed writhing in pain. Her face was contorted and she seemed out of control. Wangeci understood her condition. She excused her as it was her first experience of labour pains. She too had undergone a similar ordeal years ago when she had had her first child; a son who was later on murdered. That was before she gave up and divorced her husband for his intolerable love for infidelity.

"Where is Omolo?" Wangeci asked with a note of concern.

The mention of her husband ignited a flicker of anger in Jennifer and her face became even paler.

"The devil is still drinking his head off in Karumaindo!" she answered in anger.

She had good reasons to be angry. Omolo was a habitual drunkard whose love for beer surpassed all else, family commitments included. That very day, Jennifer had told him she thought her delivery time was due. She asked him to return home early from the pub. However, Omolo had ignored her plea and was at the moment probably boozing at Karumaindo, his favourite bar in the village. Jennifer had left the door open so that when he came she would not have to get up to open it.

"Relax, Jennifer," Wangeci said "I'll rush to King'ori and ask him to drive you to hospital",

Jennifer never said a word. She just watched Wangeci walk to the door and get out of the house.

King'ori was the village idol. Unlike all others he had a car; a very old car whose exhaust pipe produced a deafening noise any time the engine was revved, as if to announce his arrival. Village gossip had it that he was a racketeer in the Nairobi business underworld. However, he was a good man who was highly respected for his kindness and humility. He never turned down anyone who asked him a favour. This made many people to jokingly say that if he ever contested a civil seat he could be elected unopposed. Even though, King'ori seemed to enjoy doing good to people and getting nothing in return.

When Wangeci knocked on his door and explained the reason for her midnight visit, King'ori jumped out of bed dressed quickly and was soon driving her to Jennifer's house. Of course the whole village knew something was up for as usual the faulty exhaust pipe produced a deafening noise which woke every sleeping soul. King'ori liked it that way. He knew that the talk in the slum the following morning would feature him in all kinds of adjectives. He loved the praises!

By the time the car was pulling up at Jennifer's house, a number of women had gathered and were already helping her to get ready. The noise from King'ori's car had alerted them of its arrival.

King'ori got out and opened the passenger door. He greeted all the women with his usual warmth and watched them help Jennifer into the car. Just then someone was seen approaching the house. Everyone became alert and Wangeci held her knife firmly having fished it from her brassiere, at lightning speed. King'ori too held a pocket knife and directed the beam of light from his torch in the direction of the shadowy figure. When the beam illuminated the figure, a chorus of jeers ensued, punctuated by clicks and silent curses. Who would have liked to see Omolo crawling on all fours in drunken stupor as his wife was experiencing labour pains?

"Who ... oo ... aare you? Wha ... at... aare you ... doing here?" Omolo stammered.

"Go back and have more of that filthy drink you shamelessly call beer. You can't even get time to remember your family obligations!" Wangeci shouted at him.

One of the women asked her to take it easy as shouting would only make Omolo more stubborn.

"Who ... what... who is that shameless... stupid ... mad woman who is abusing me without blinking?" Omolo stammered.

"Cool down and get into the house Mr Omolo. We are taking your wife to the hospital," King'ori said placatingly.

"Who ... who ... who is that? King ... King'ori. Where is your car? You are a thief! You steal and buy a car. I will buy a Mercedes Benz when I get rich. I cannot... King'ori, you never came for a bottle today. You are a woman you fool!"

King'ori heard Omolo's drunken stammers but he ignored them. He got into the car and sat behind the wheel. Three of the women also got into the car and the other three were left out. As Omolo continued hurling drunken comments, King'ori engaged the gear and drove away.

The hospital was five kilometres away, in Ngong town, and they had to get there as soon as possible. As the car moved Wangeci commented that Omolo did not deserve to be anybody's husband by any standards. The others did not comment but deep within them they too felt the same way.

The car drove smoothly out of Witeithie village and after a kilometre, it moved on to the main road. As it prepared to start the second half of the journey, the unexpected happened. The engine suddenly stopped running and the car stalled.

"The clutch has burned!" King'ori exclaimed.

The women looked puzzled and Wangeci gave King'ori a questioning look which suggested that she had not understood a thing about what he had said. Finally, her gaze finally landed on Jennifer.

"How are you feeling?" Wangeci asked.

Jennifer wriggled and groaned.

"The car can't move without a new clutch," King'ori said at last in a resigned manner which showed the matter was now beyond his control.

The women exchanged glances. Their minds were brought to the present by the sharp groan of pain that Jennifer let out, as she did so and changed her sitting position.

"The baby is coming!" Wangeci exclaimed. "Where is the first aid box?"

King'ori looked at her in amazement but he soon recovered to size up the situation. Reflexively he reached for the dashboard and opened the tool box. He quickly extracted a medium sized first aid box and gave it to Wangeci.

"Get out of the car please," Wangeci told King'ori.

King'ori quickly got out of the car and the women sprang into action.

Wangeci masterminded the delivery. Fifteen minutes later the child was born and it was confirmed to be a boy. It was wrapped in Wangeci's pullover. Its face radiated a unique energy and a great determination to live. Jennifer shed tears of joy as she stared fixedly at her baby boy. She had waited for so long for this moment. Nine months was not a short time for someone who had never given birth before. Now she was glad. The waiting was over and she had a child; a healthy baby boy.

The following day she named him Douglas; Douglas Kamau.

When Douglas was two years old his father was shot dead during a bar brawl at Karumaindo. Even though Jennifer mourned his death,

she was unconsciously relieved. Nature had rid her of a man who had been a thorn in her flesh for far too long. She felt confident that she was well prepared to take the new challenge of being the breadwinner of the family. In theory, she had been prepared for this role by Omolo. His don't-care attitude, carelessness and general neglect of the family had taught her that it was not okay to develop total reliance on the husband for the family's upkeep. This psychological preparation was now a necessary weapon after fate had struck at last. Or was the death a blessing in disguise? That she could not tell but she could now face the future with confidence.

* * * * *

Jennifer sighted green pastures five kilometres from Witeithie village in Ngong town. This was at a time when urban-rural migration was at its peak and there was an emerging trend of industrialisation in Ngong. People were moving from Nairobi to establish homes and businesses in Ngong. This was characterised by an erection of buildings both small and big in the town and its environs. Thus, Ngong became an employment centre for the jobless, especially those who did not mind working on the construction sites. The youth from Witeithie invaded this new sector and Jennifer was not left behind. She did not enlist to work on the construction sites for she lacked the energy needed for the job. However, she decided to feed the workers for she too had to gainfully earn a living.

She baked bread and cakes at night and prepared tea. When morning came she carried the foodstuff to the construction sites and sold it to the workers. By sunset, all the food was finished and she had a substantial sum of money in her purse. It was this money that she used to bring up Douglas.

When Douglas was five years old, Jennifer took him to Ngong Primary School which was the nearest government school in the area. She was not educated herself but she understood the importance of education. She knew there was no better inheritance she could give her child other than education. Kenya was a society in transition and

the emerging changes called for the acquisition of education for one to survive. This she knew very well and did not want her son to be left behind.

Douglas showed interest in education during his early years in school. Perhaps the interest was inculcated in him by his mother who always encouraged excellence in school work. When he was in Standard Two he managed to rank first in class and for several days Douglas was the talk of his village more so among his peers. Jennifer knew how to make a child feel happy and proud of his performance and above all, have a zeal to do even better. When Douglas brought his report form home and told her that he had beaten all his classmates, she was elated and promised him a present.

Presently, she bought him a pair of trousers which she knew would make him very happy. At the time, children of Douglas' age were all wearing shorts and he became the first to cover his knees. Douglas was very happy and he developed zeal to perform well in school. He was engulfed by a strong sense of excellence.

Guided by this drive which was fuelled by the high degree of respect and recognition from his peers, Douglas stuck to his word and maintained his academic dominance in class. He led his class for the remaining years, including Standard Seven where he scooped uncountable presents from the school administration for academic excellence. When he sat for the Certificate of Primary Education examination that year, he was confident he would pass, and he did. He scooped all the points and was offered a place in the best school at the time; Alliance High School.

Douglas was celebrated in Witeithie as a hero. Never before had anyone in the village made it to a national school. His mother congratulated him using all sorts of adjectives. However, there was one thing that troubled her. A lot of money would be needed for Douglas' school fees – an amount stretching to thousands of shillings. However much she tried to comfort herself, she could not evade the grim reality that her small scale food business would not yield enough money for her son's education. But she did not give up hope. She knew Douglas had to proceed with his education and she prayed to God to make it

happen. She had to think of something pretty; fast something had to be done. Soon she knew what to do.

She approached the area Chief and told him she was unable to meet the financial obligation of educating her son, who was about to join the best school in Kenya. The chief, like all other villagers knew Douglas as the village hero who was to join Alliance High School. If money was the barrier then something had to be done. The boy must pursue further studies and bring more glory to the village, whatever the circumstances, the Chief thought.

He consulted the village elders and they deliberated on the issue. They decided unanimously that Douglas was to be treated as the village's son and the villagers were to chip in towards his education. A committee was formed to arrange for a fund-raising meeting where money for Douglas' school fees would be raised.

When the day came, all the villagers gathered at the playground in Witeithie and everyone donated whatever amount they could afford. At the end of the function, the money collected was enough to finance Douglas' schooling upto Form Four. It was agreed that the Chief would manage this money.

* * * * *

Douglas threw himself into secondary school education like one possessed. He knew he owed it all to his fellow villagers. They had invested in him and he was obligated to achieve academic excellence so as not to betray their trust. At first the going was tough. He had met talented classmates who had also been the best pupils in their schools. They all shared his dream of striving for perfection and they had intellectual might to achieve it. Douglas quickly redoubled his efforts to be on equal footing with such academic giants who were drawn from all corners of the country. Before long, he managed to be an academic giant among giants in his class. He was proud of his achievements. His mother was proud of him, just as were the villagers who saw him as their son, hero and role model. In their slums, they talked confidently that he was giving them value for their money. They were all glad they had shouldered the responsibility of educating him.

Like in primary school, Douglas maintained his lead in class to the end. When he sat for his 'O' level examinations he got a strong First Division and proceeded to Form Five in the same institution. Once again his education was financed by the villagers and he continued with his unique academic dominance. When in Form Five, Douglas developed an interest in writing and a strong urge to study the human society so as to understand it better. He made up his mind to be a writer and would study anthropology at the university. He worked hard day and night to achieve this dream and he eventually made it.

When the results for his 'A' level examination were out everyone rejoiced for he had passed remarkably. He had successfully overcome the last barrier towards the highest institution of learning. His mother shed tears of joy when she received the news. His friends and the villagers celebrated and ululated in his honour showering him with praises. Everybody was proud that their hero was still going strong. Two months later he would make history by being the first person from Witeithie to join a university.

For Douglas, the victory was a blessing. When he learned that he had been admitted to the University of Nairobi to study anthropology he rejoiced openly.

* * * * *

On the eighteenth day of August, 1970, a telephone rang in the Governor's Office at the Central Bank. The Governor, Professor Edward Waihenya, a professor in Economics, removed his glasses and carefully wiped them. Returning his handkerchief in a deliberate manner, he waited for the telephone to ring a few more times then put on the glasses and picked up the receiver.

"Hello," he boomed into the mouth piece.

Then suddenly his face, which had depicted a plain indifference, shone brightly. The call was from his wife Emily. Edward knew immediately what was up and he was glad.

Rising from his velvet executive seat, he walked hurriedly to the door. He left the office and got into the secretary's office. She

immediately noted with surprise the sudden change of mood from his bossy disposition.

"You look happy today sir," she teased, "What's up?"

"You'll read in the papers tomorrow," Edward said proudly.

Another multimillion deal? the secretary wondered. It must surely be something of substance. At that moment Edward smiled and his secretary reciprocated.

"Cancel all my appointments for today," Edward said.

"You mean you won't be back for the whole day?" she asked.

"Take them forward to tomorrow," Edward said and began walking towards the door.

The secretary watched him as he left the office and closed the door behind him. She then began to type out a long letter that he had written to the World Bank President seeking a multimillion dollar loan for the country.

Edward took the lift and in a moment he was on the ground floor. He walked past the Reception waved at the receptionist and finally went out of the building. At the staff parking lot, he stopped at his sleek blue limousine. His driver was a few metres from the car basking in the morning sun. When he saw Edward, he stood up and moved to the car, preparing to fish out the ignition keys. He knew that the boss wanted to leave.

"Take me home," Edward said to the already attentive driver.

Then he got in the car immediately, at the back, as the driver took his position behind the wheel.

In the next few minutes the car was cruising towards Lavington, a high class estate reserved for the country's few millionaires by the natural social stratification.

The limousine came to a halt inside a well kept compound that had a lovely lawn around a beautiful house. Edward jumped out and walked quickly to the front door. As he was getting in, he met his wife Emily who was being supported by her house help.

"How are you feeling my love?" he asked.

Emily looked composed but her protruding tummy revealed that her time to deliver had come.

"We must rush to the hospital," she whispered.

Edward retraced his steps and watched as she took slowly walked out of the house. They all walked towards the limousine, whose passenger door was already open. When Edward and Emily were comfortably seated, they instructed the driver to take them to Nairobi Hospital.

Professor Edward Waihenya was well known at Nairobi Hospital where he was usually referred to as Governor. As every doctor and nurse knew, the Governor was to be treated with great respect.

When the limousine came to a halt at the VIP parking lot, the hospital attendant saw it and immediately made out Edward's figure at the back seat. He quickly walked to the car and reached it as Edward was helping Emily out. The attendant immediately knew what the matter at hand was.

"Good morning Professor Waihenya," he greeted.

Edward looked at him for a second. He was lost in thought, confusion and uncertainty. He wanted just one thing in the world. To see his child whom he had been waiting for impatiently for nine months.

"I'm fine. As you can see my wife needs help," Edward said.

"No problem sir, we shall handle this," the attendant said as he helped Emily walk the few metres to the hospital's entrance.

When Edward reached the doors all eyes settled on him and there was a silent murmur of excitement. Everyone present seemed to take pride in having set eyes on the Governor who was a celebrity. The attendant talked to three nurses who rushed to help Emily walk slowly to the maternity ward nearby. Edward was left standing in the corridor looking fairly relaxed.

Five minutes later the chief nurse at the ward came and told Edward that in about twenty minutes his wife would have had the baby. Meanwhile, the nurse asked him to wait in the VIP lounge near the hospital's entrance. He thanked her and instead of waiting at the lounge, he went to the car.

There, he decided to kill the anxiety by reading a copy of the day's newspaper. He read and looked at the pictures, but he grasped nothing. His mind was focused on the child. All the while he kept stealing expectant glances at his gold watch, watching the minutes as they ticked by. Ten minutes . . . fifteen minutes . . . what a long wait.

When Edward was about to throw the newspaper on the seat and get out of the car, the chief nurse appeared at the hospital's entrance and walked briskly towards the limousine. Edward quickly interpreted the smile on her face and got out of the car to meet her.

"Is she through?" Edward asked as his heart skipped several beats.

"Everything has gone very well sir," the nurse said.

"A boy or a girl?" Edward asked emotionally.

"A girl."

Edward immediately began to make long strides towards the hospital's entrance. The nurse walked in line and soon they were in the maternity ward.

Emily sat on a bed holding the baby that was wrapped in a woollen towel. Edward grabbed the baby from her and kissed it in an uncontrollable emotional outburst. Just then, the door to the ward opened and two men carrying cameras got in. They introduced themselves as reporters and immediately began to flash their camera bulbs at Edward as he held the child tightly in his arms. Edward wondered who had informed the journalists that he was in the hospital but he did not think too much about it. He liked publicity.

The following day the whole country knew that Professor Edward Waihenya, Governor of Central Bank, had got a daughter Nancy Wanja.

* * * * *

Nancy was brought up in affluence from first day. She missed nothing that was of necessity to her as a child. Her father, just like her mother, loved her dearly. Perhaps it was because she was their only child and they had waited for a long time after their marriage to get this child. Or perhaps it was because they belonged to the highest social class in the country which demanded that their child be given the best. Whatever the reason, they loved her dearly.

When Nancy was five years, old her parents took her to Banda School, one of the most expensive primary school in the city. Amid an atmosphere of affluence, Edward encouraged his daughter to work hard in class. He bought her all the books that she needed and even taught her at home during the holidays.

Nancy took her father's advice seriously and put all the efforts she could muster into her academic work. Though she never quite managed to lead her class she always held a good position, among the top five students. She showed a great interest in learning and her father was delited. He was happy that his daughter was not going to let him down by being a dunderhead in school. To reward Nancy and to motivate her to continue with the same spirit of academic excellence, Edward sold the Toyota which took her daily to and from school and replaced it with a brand new Mercedes Benz. He also hired a new chauffeur.

When Nancy sat for her Certificate of Primary Education, she emerged victorious. She was among the first twenty pupils who had scored the highest marks in her school. Her father took her to Kenya High School for her secondary school education. It was one of the best secondary schools in the country.

At Kenya High, Nancy studied as hard as she had done in primary school. When she sat for her O levels she was sure she would pass. This she did.

Nancy proceeded for her A levels in the same school and while in Form Five she underwent an ideological revolution. Throughout her life she had lived in affluence. In school her friends were children of wealthy parents; for both Kenya High School and Banda School were schools for the rich. Her friends in the neighbourhood were children of the wealthy. All this inculcated in her one single culture, to view life as a bed of roses. She had never in her life encountered a financial problem. Her socialisation with friends was centred on high class living. But as Nancy lived in this world of wealth, she could not avoid interacting with another distant culture. A culture that was loathed by her friends. A culture that was despised and scorned by her parents; a culture of poverty. She interacted with this culture through the mass media.

She read in the newspaper about people who slept in the cold for lack of shelter, of many others who went hungry, their tummies constantly rumbling in protest at the emptiness. She read and viewed on television accounts of children who had been abandoned by their parents and who wore tattered clothes, fed from dustbins and slept in backstreets.

She read and imagined these poor people suffering in a country that boasted of having billionaires and a strong feeling of isolation and guilt engulfed her. Her conscience told her that it was morally wrong for her to eat buttered bread every morning while other human beings did not have anything to eat at all. She felt it was wrong for her to go to school in a Mercedes Benz while others trekked miles and miles to school, or change clothes within hours while others were forever in shabby tatters. What a culture!

One day, she viewed on television poor slum dwellers being evicted by city commission policemen so as to create room for the building of skyscrapers. She saw the horror of the bulldozers running all over and flattening the slums. She watched as people cried in desperate agony while their grass thatched one roomed houses were flattened and reduced to rubble. She saw the grief that filled the faces of these slum dwellers as they watched helplessly the destruction of their property and they could not tell where they would spend the night or what the future held for them. And she saw the indifference in the faces of the city commission officials as they watched the destruction from their Mercedes Benz cars, their faces breaking into smiles of satisfaction. What a primitive culture! Nancy empathised with the victims and a feeling of hatred came over her. It was a strong hate for the oppressors, who dehumanised the poor in society. And without realising it, tears began to run down her cheeks in an uncontrollable streams.

That day Nancy approached her father and told him that she would no longer need to be taken to school in the Mercedes Benz as it was a social excess that she felt could do without. From then onwards she would be going to school using public transport like the majority of the pupils.

Her father was openly surprised. What devil had suddenly got into her? he wondered. He could not tune his mind to believe that a human being could fail to appreciate a high standard of living. According to his philosophy of life, man should wish for the best from the world. When he asked her why she did not want to be driven to school any more, she told him plainly that she would be more comfortable going by bus and that she could not change her decision. He did not agree

with her but he loved her as his only daughter and could not annoy her. So he granted her request.

Nancy thought seriously on the social structure in the world and developed a strong interest to study the human society. She had a thirst for answers to the questions that disturbed her mind. Why some people enjoy luxurious lives while others perished in the flames of poverty? Why did nature allowed this to happen? Why was the feeling of humanity really lacking in society? To understand this, she resolved to study anthropology at the university.

Nancy then worked even harder in school to prove to her to father that using public transport could not make her performance in school to go down. She duly proved it for she improved remarkably. When she sat for her 'A' level examination she passed very well and managed to secure a place at the University of Nairobi.

There was a shortlived conflict with her father even as she made it to university. He wanted her to study economics and join to a university in America instead. He had the money needed to finance her education and this too would enhance his social status. At the time, he had left the Central Bank and was now the chairman of the African Development Bank whose headquarters were in Nairobi. He therefore had the wealth and influence to secure a place in any prestigious university abroad. He hoped to take her to Harvard or Yale.

However, Nancy was principled and she stuck to her guns and refused to take any other course apart from anthropology. To the dismay of her father too, she refused to study in America, branding the gesture a luxury she could do without. She told him firmly that she would be comfortable at the University of Nairobi.

Her parents knew they could do nothing to dissuade her. They agreed to let her join the University of Nairobi to study anthropology. Nancy was glad.

* * * * *

On November 12th, 1990, the atmosphere at the University was laden with excitement. The university's Great Court was a rainbow of colours as a myriad of excited people moved about in a cacophonous

frenzy. They were the university's 'freshers' whose number stretched to several thousands. They were busy signing the registration forms which would officially declare them students of the university.

The registration was done according to faculties, with each having its registration desk where students lined up and were served one at a time. It was at the Anthropology desk at the far right hand side of the Great Court that some drama unfolded.

A young lady came to join the queue, her mind so engrossed in the exercise ahead that she did not notice a small tennis ball which was on the ground. She stepped on it, swang forward as she fought to maintain her balance, and her papers which were well held in a clipboard went flying from her hand. As the papers made a haphazard landing on the green grass, she heard loud peals of laughter from the queue and she felt a tinge of embarrassment. Then she saw a young man walk out off the queue as the others continued laughing, and collect the scattered papers for her.

The young man put the papers together and stuck them to the clipboard.

Then he gave them back to her. She was very impressed by his generosity and kindness.

"Sorry for the accident madam," he said.

"Thank you very much," the young lady said.

The young man then walked back to the queue.

The lady followed, taking her position like everyone else. Before long the incident was forgotten, but she never forgot it. It stayed fixed in her sharp memory.

When the registration was over and the students were allocated rooms in the university's halls of residence, the young lady saw the young man somewhere in the distance. He was walking briskly along the pavement of one of the buildings in the administration block following a stream of other students who were heading for the halls a few metres away. He held a simple suitcase in one hand and a big envelope in the other. The young lady increased her pace and within a few minutes she was just behind him. She patted him gently on the shoulder and watched as he turned to face her.

"Hi," she said.

"Hi," the young man said and stopped.

"I owe you thanks," she said, and the young man just smiled.

"No problem, it's all part of life," he said when he remembered her.

"I'm Nancy Wanja."

"I'm Douglas Kamau. I'm glad to meet you, Nancy," he said.

"You're a gentleman. You didn't laugh at me like the others,"

Nancy reflected.

Douglas smiled.

"I can't blame them. It's all part of human nature," he said.

"Which room have you been allocated?" asked Nancy.

"Hall Nine, room 106," Douglas said.

"I've been given room 109B in the women's hall," Nancy said.

"The university looks so big and beautiful," Douglas remarked as he began to move again.

They walked together the few remaining metres to the halls. Douglas was the first to branch off. He walked along a tunnel over which was a road and came to Hall Nine. Nancy walked further to the women's hall which was at the end of the campus.

In the evening at around seven that day, there was a knock at Douglas' door. When he opened it, Nancy walked in. She had a broad smile and Douglas thought she looked more beautiful under the hundred watt bulb in the room than under the bright sunshine of the day.

"I've come to say good evening, Douglas," she explained.

"Oh, do sit down please," Douglas said happily, "I'm glad that you have come. You're my first visitor on campus and my diary will proclaim it for years to come."

Nancy sat on the simple chair next to Douglas.

"How was your day?" she asked.

"Fine, but very busy," he replied.

"You're the first friend I've made on campus," Nancy said, smiling.

"The same to me. You were the first to say hello to me," Douglas said.

"Where do you come from?" she asked.

"From Ngong. Ever heard of Witeithie village?" Douglas asked. Nancy's face shone with brightness, intermeshed with curiosity.

and satisfaction. Witeithie village was well known countrywide, not because of its prosperity but because of the acute poverty of its inhabitants. Strangely, she felt a stream of relief. She had now found the kind of friend she had been lacking for twenty years. A friend who belonged to a different culture; the culture, of the suffering, the culture of the wretched.

"I've heard of it quite often," she said in a sad tone.

"That is where I come from," Douglas said. "I went to Ngong Primary School before proceeding to Alliance High School in Kikuyu. From there I found my way through the narrow path to this university."

"Congratulations for making it to university," Nancy said excitedly.

"The same to you. I admire ladies who excel in education," Douglas said.

"Thank you. I come from Lavington," Nancy said.

Douglas raised an eyebrow. He was openly surprised. He had not imagined that such a humble girl could be a member of the high social class.

"Have you ever heard of Professor Edward Waihenya?" she continued.

Douglas was dazed even more.

"Who? It can't be. Isn't he the chairman of the African Development Bank and formerly the Governor of the Central Bank?"

"Why do you think so?" Nancy asked curiously.

"You look like the daughter of a peasant," Douglas said.

"Stop teasing me, Douglas," she said.

"I mean it. You're too humble and understanding to be a millionaire's daughter. I think you could live comfortably in Witeithie village and no one will know of your affluent roots," he exclaimed.

"Thank you for the compliment. I never knew I had such a personality," Nancy said faintly but seriously. "I was at Banda School for my primary school and Kenya High for my secondary education."

"You are lucky to have had such a comfortable beginning," Douglas said.

"I was unlucky if I may put it that way. That was a prison. I have been in prison for twenty years," she said as she tried to explain.

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"I was unlucky if I may put it that way. That was a prison. I have been in prison for twenty years," she said as she tried to explain.

"What do you mean?" he asked, openly surprised.

"I never had a chance to interact with the real world. I was confined to one culture; the culture of affluence which is characterised by isolation. My father insisted that a chauffeur drives me to school everyday but I refused when I was in high school and insisted on going by bus. I'm glad to meet you Douglas. I've never had a chance to confide in a friend who doesn't just have stories of birthday presents and holidays abroad," Nancy said as she heaved a heavy sigh of relief.

"Your experience is so different from mine, Nancy. In Witeithie we live from hand to mouth. I've only my mother who ekes a precarious living from hawking food to workers at construction sites in Ngong. My father died when I was young. His memory has faded from my mind but I get a vague description from what my mother tells me about him. She tells me that he was a habitual drunk who was so reckless that neglected us without blinking."

"One day my mother recounted to me how I was born. She said my father was out on a drinking spree when she developed labour pains in the middle of the night. A neighbour came to help her when she heard her cries of agony. She then went to call the only man who owned a car in the village. The man was kind and when he was told about the state my mother was in, and was requested to drive her to Ngong Hospital, he agreed. However, the car developed mechanical problems before reaching the hospital and it could not move any further. My mother then gave birth to a baby boy in the car that night. That baby was me," Douglas said and tears began to stream down his cheeks as the sad reminiscence touched his heart.

"I'm sorry, Douglas. Compose yourself. It's all part of life," Nancy said consolingly.

She too was touched by his sad story.

"My mother taught me to work hard in class," Douglas continued as he wiped the tears with his palm. "She always told me that education would save us from poverty and she rewarded me when I performed well in school. I was the first boy to wear trousers in our village, courtesy of my mother when I scooped the first position in class. When

I passed the final examination in primary school and I was offered a place at Alliance, my mother couldn't afford the fees and she consulted the village Chief. The Chief organised a fund raising meeting and enough money was collected from the villagers for my schools fees. I'm now here at the highest level of learning through the sacrifice of my fellow villagers. I'm greatly indebted to them and I'll always strive not to let them down."

"Why does the world have to be so unfair to some people?" Nancy asked.

"Anthropology will explain that," Douglas said with a smile.

"My father insisted that I should take economics and that I should go to a university in America but I turned down the offer. I told him that I was going to study anthropology and that I would join the University of Nairobi like the others," Nancy said, and Douglas smiled.

"I've never met a person of your kind before. You seem to be opposed to the things people hold dear!" Douglas exclaimed.

"It's just a matter of principle. I've to choose what is good for me and it doesn't have to conform to what is conventional," Nancy said.

"You're a good person Nancy," Douglas said kindly.

"Thank you. I think I should be leaving now," Nancy said.

"Thank you for paying me a visit. You've even added more material to my article," Douglas said, without offering any explanation.

"Which article?" Nancy asked as she rose from the seat.

"The one I'm going to write about my first day at the university," Douglas said.

"Are you a writer?" Nancy asked with a curious smile.

"An aspiring writer," Douglas said confidently.

"Congratulations. Writing is not a simple task. Have a good night," she said.

"Same to you," Douglas said as Nancy opened the door and left, closing it gently behind her.

Douglas gazed at the door for a minute and then stood up to lock it. He smiled broadly and went back to desk. He took a fullscap and began to write the article entitled 'A Village Son Goes To University.'

In the days that followed Nancy and Douglas became close friends and as the weeks passed, they both knew that they were in love. Their different backgrounds did not affect their relationship as Nancy enjoyed his company to the full and Douglas too felt at home in her company. In class they sat together and they spent their leisure time together.

One Sunday night, exactly a month since they started dating, they went to watch a movie at the university's Education Theatre. They then returned to Douglas' room where they talked about the film, and their academic life. Finally, when neither of them could control their emotions any longer, they kissed, caressed and at last made love.

Then Douglas said, "It is the first time I have made love to a millionaire's daughter."

Chapter Two

Professor Edward Waihenya sat leisurely on a leather seat in his posh office on the magnificent Peacock Towers in the heart of Nairobi. Peacock Towers was one of the buildings that had sprung up in the early eighties, making Nairobi equal any other major world cities. Besides improving the physical appearance, more so in the eyes of tourists who came to Kenya, this breed of new buildings also boosted the country's economy. Foreign investors were attracted to the country as they would have respectable buildings in which they would establish their offices and which would offer the needed class to reflect the prestige demanded by their multinational nature. Lilian Towers which was credited for having this quality was where the African Development Bank's headquarters was first established when they were moved from Abidjan.

Edward gazed at the pile of documents which lay on the mahogany table before him and sighed heavily. His sigh was punctuated by a slight curse. For the last few weeks he had become busier. Currently, all the documents laying before him needed his signature, he was already tired.

Sometimes Edward thought seriously about the social stratification in the human society and he could not help but believe that those who were in the highest social class actually deserved to be there. Arguing from the perspective of his own experience, he believed that they had worked hard to be in their current status by pulling a few tricks here and there. He scoffed at the critics who argued that those in the high social status did the least work. He particularly hated writers who had been spearheading the campaign against people like him. If those bastards were here to see the pile of work before him they would think twice before writing such filth, he thought bitterly.

Edward removed his glasses, scratched his right eyelid of his left eye and then put them back on. Putting his pen in his pocket, he decided to go for an early lunch and a bit of relaxation before coming back in the afternoon to sign the pile of documents. He walked briskly to the door and was preparing to pull it open when the telephone started ringing.

He wanted about to ignore it but thought otherwise. He would make the conversation brief, he thought. He took the receiver and boomed his usual "hallo" in a bored tone.

"A call for you professor," his secretary's voice sang in the earpiece.

Edward cursed slightly.

"For how long have I told you to drop that formality Jane?" he burst out.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I'll remember that next time," she said teasingly.

"Who is calling?" Edward asked.

"The call is from Washington," Jane said faintly.

"Washington?" Edward asked like one who had not heard clearly.

"Yes, it's from the headquarters of Romthex International," Jane said.

Edward's bored face now reflected vibrant energy and a broad smile appeared. The weariness that had engulfed him disappeared and he felt a renewed energy seeping back into his body.

"Put the call through Jane," he said as his heart throbbed a million times.

There was a momentous silence and then a hoarse voice boomed in the earpiece.

"Hallow. Is that Professor Edward Waihenya?" the voice asked.

"Yes, it is," Edward answered.

"I'm calling from the headquarters of Romthex International. The Executive Chairman would like to have a word with you," a lady's voice said.

There was a brief silence and then the Chairman's voice came on.

"Good morning Professor Waihenya, my name is Roger Mathews, the Executive Chairman of Romthex International."

"Good morning Mr Mathews," Edward answered, changing his voice to incorporate an artificial politeness.

"You remember your request to have an audience with me in connection with the funding of your bank?" Mr Mathews asked.

"Yes Mr Mathews, I've all along been waiting for a word from you," Edward replied, excitement evident in his voice.

"As you know, I'm concerned with the development of Africa and I'm prepared to offer whatever help I can to help accelerate the development of the continent. It's in this light that I've decided to give audience to a delegation from your bank on Monday next week," Mathews said.

"Thank you very much for your positive response Mr Mathews. I highly appreciated your favourable consideration and gesture of goodwill," Edward said.

"The visit's itinerary will be sent to you as soon as possible," Mathews said.

"We'll be glad to receive it," Edward replied, his voice barely concealing the excitement running within him.

"Meanwhile, see you in Washington on Monday," Mathews said.

"Thank you. Goodbye Mr Mathews," Edward said.

He heard the telephone click as Mathews replaced the receiver. Edward then put his receiver down gently and let out a prolonged sigh. For some strange reason, his heart was beating fast. He relaxed for a few minutes until it slowed to near normal level. Then his mind played back the serious events that had ultimately led to the present development. It had all started in the creative mind of the Nigerian president, Major General Pancreas Atemi whose name had come to the political limelight almost overnight.

* * * * *

Pancreas was born in Southern Nigeria. He was among the first to be enrolled in schools set up by the Christian missionaries. His parents thought joining the school was a good thing as being without formal education, they thought made one a savage. The atmosphere at home where his parents were firm Christians and at school in the hands of the missionaries moulded him into a totally cultureless person in the eyes of his society. On the contrary, he did have a culture; only that it was a distant one, a thousand miles away and in a land he had never set foot. This new culture emphasised the acquisition of education and he had to do just that. Pancreas excelled in his academic work.

Due to his academic prowess, he was offered a scholarship to pursue further studies at Oxford University. He was among the first

Africans to join the university which by then was revered worldwide for its high degree of academic excellence. He studied divinity and theology in his first three years, not because he was a devout Christian but because his sponsors insisted that he do so as a condition of getting the scholarship. This was an investment on their part as far as their Christian crusade was concerned. They hoped he would come back to Nigeria armed with all the knowledge there was about Christianity and with the passion of worker ants, start cruising the length and breadth of Nigeria convincing Africans of the dire need to discard their traditional ways in favour of Christianity.

Pancreas was never on the same wavelength as the missionaries. He never dreamt of investing his energy in proclaiming the superiority of Christianity. In fact, deep within himself, he doubted the existence of the biblical Jesus Christ and viewed Christianity as just another ideology. To him, Jesus was a historical creation, a figure whose survival in the minds of oncoming generations was only sustained by the development of literature and the printing technology which kept a permanent record for posterity. But he knew better than to tell the missionaries in their face his beliefs and principles. All he wanted was their education which would help him achieve a dream that was unknown to them. A dream that would eventually see their downfall.

When his three years at Oxford were over and he received his degree, Pancreas was supposed to quickly pack his bags and leave for home. Indeed, the missionaries prepared a party to welcome him. They wanted to use the occasion as a tool to demonstrate to other Africans the importance of accepting Christianity and by extension, western education. Everyone would be treated to the sight of Pancreas in a three-piece suit, shining shoes, a tie and a suitcase, which they would all crave to possess. However, Pancreas refused to go back to Nigeria although he knew that as a result the missionaries would no longer support him. He was not worried because his academic excellence spoke for him, and he got a chance to further his studies at Oxford.

At the beginning of his third and final year, Pancreas approached the university's Chancellor and in the humblest way possible asked him if the university could offer him a scholarship to study political science

after his current degree course. The Chancellor was greatly moved by the vision and courage manifested by Pancreas for he had never before seen a student come direct to him to request for a scholarship; more so, an African student. The Chancellor treated Pancreas' case with special understanding. He asked him several probing questions to which he received satisfactory answers. By the time Pancreas finished speaking, the Chancellor was convinced beyond doubt that Pancreas was not an ordinary student. He was a man of brains. He promised to check on the matter and communicate his decision to him at the earliest possible opportunity. He took his particulars and bade him goodbye as he left the office.

When Pancreas had gone, the chancellor immediately began to follow up on the matter. He telephoned the theology department and instructed the head of the department to furnish him with all the details of Pancreas Atemi, including his conduct in and out of class and his academic performance. Two hours later a file was brought to his office containing all the information he needed.

The Chancellor was impressed by the record. Apart from being an academic giant, the records also attested to the fact that Pancreas had an admirable conduct. Without even consulting the university senate he immediately decided that Pancreas should be offered a scholarship to study political science at the university after he got his theology degree.

Shortly after this, Pancreas was summoned to the Chancellor's office and told of the decision, he was overjoyed. The following day he presented the chancellor with an African cowry shell as a sign of his appreciation. From then they became good friends.

When Pancreas informed his missionary sponsors that he would not be returning to Nigeria but would instead remain in Britain to pursue further studies at Oxford, they were openly angry. The fact that they had financed his education to the extent of him getting a First Class Honours degree in theology only for him to finally desert them was unthinkable. How could such a thing happen? It was a question which they could not answer but nevertheless, the bible offered an explanation. The devil had got into Pancreas.

The missionaries pursued the matter with the university administration. When they learned that he was going to study political science and that the university would sponsor him, they became even angrier. They tried desperately to have the scholarship revoked but it was all in vain. No one in the university would dare interfere with a matter that had been recommended and approved by the Chancellor himself. Pancreas went a head to study political science.

When he started this new course, Pancreas showed a lot of zeal. He graduated three years later with a First Class Honours degree and was offered another scholarship for a Masters degree, an offer he quickly accepted. As his friendship with the Chancellor strengthened, the latter offered him a job as a Lecturer at the university if he agreed to pursue a Doctorate. The university would give him a scholarship for the Doctorate. Pancreas buried himself in books and managed to successfully complete the PhD by coming up with a well researched thesis on the political organisation of African societies. Soon after, he was offered a job as a Senior Lecturer in Political Science.

Six years later Pancreas rose to head the political science department. It was then that he conflicted with many scholars at the university because of his attempts to correct the distorted image of Africa in the eyes of the West by giving emphasis on the study of the African political set-up in its positive and true perspective. While working on his PhD thesis, he had travelled extensively around Africa. He had seen for himself the vast resources Africa had and he began thinking seriously about how the continent could rise out of its abyss of poverty. He believed that politics played a direct role in determining whether Africa was to achieve that goal or remain in its poverty.

* * * * *

The Biafra war in Nigeria came at a time when Pancreas was at his peak at Oxford University. The fact that the Igbo people wanted to secede from Nigeria drove him crazy. He was an Igbo himself but the idea of secession did not augur well with his political conviction for the economic recovery of Africa which he believed was only possible through unity in the exploitation of Africa's vast resources. Pancreas

was in a dilemma. Was he to merely watch as the war for secession progressed and thus remain an idealist in London, thousands of miles from home, or was he to do something practical in line with his political philosophy?

Pancreas chose the latter. He chose to leave his prestigious job as head of the political science department at Oxford and go home. He would enlist in the federal government army to fight against the secessionists.

When he had learned of the beginning of the war through the mass media, Pancreas had written a long letter to the President of Nigeria through the Nigerian embassy in London, telling him that he was ready to leave his job at Oxford and join the government army if he would be allowed. The President was naturally overjoyed to learn that he had the support of a person who was ready to sacrifice a prestigious job to join him in the fight against government saboteurs.

The following day Pancreas tendered his resignation personally to the Chancellor. The latter was very upset when he learnt that Pancreas was leaving Oxford to go to war in Nigeria. The Chancellor expressed his sorrow at losing Pancreas, whom he described as one of the best scholars he had ever come across, he wished him luck in the Biafra war. He prayed that Pancreas would not be unlucky in the war and told him that there would still be a vacancy for him at the university if he wished to go back after the war.

Pancreas left for Nigeria, leaving behind his British wife and two children. In Lagos, he was given a dignitary's red carpet welcome, with the President coming to the airport personally to meet him and making sure the event was screened on national television for people to see clearly what patriotism meant. Patriotism, as he said in his welcoming speech, meant sacrificing everything for one's country. He described Pancreas as a true patriot as he had done exactly that. Indeed he was a true nationalist. He had sacrificed totally and willingly for his country.

Pancreas spent two weeks training for ground combat and then he joined the federal army in the rough terrain of Nigeria. He did not fight better than the rest of the soldiers but he threw himself into the challenge ahead zealously. He was propelled by a great conviction that

simmered within him. The prayer of the Oxford University Chancellor that he would come out of the war alive was fulfilled. He left the battle field with a few injuries, but above all, he left a consoled man. He felt confident that he had played a practical role in crushing the selfish, ambitious dreams of the secessionists.

Pancreas wanted to leave for London as soon as his injuries healed. He had already telephoned the Chancellor at Oxford and had been promised immediate placement but this dream was shattered by the Nigerian President Obi Telewa, at the eleventh hour.

The President, who paid a surprise visit to Pancreas' hotel room in Lagos, said he had to come to congratulate him personally for the heroic part he had played in ushering in a national victory. The President went further to tell Pancreas that he had decided to appoint him his military advisor with immediate effect.

Pancreas was dazed. He was lost in a world of confusion. The Chancellor of Oxford University had promised him immediate reappointment at the university and now the President wanted him as his military advisor! Which of the two offers would he take? He had to think and think fast.

He was a professor of political science and in his own right, a great Scholar. Above all he was a scholar with a vision for his motherland. If he was going to go back to Britain he would continue trying to repair the image of Africa in the eyes of the scholarly world and create awareness on the best means through which Africa could develop. However, if he was to take the job he was being offered by the President, he would be in direct contact with a section of the Africa leadership and would perhaps be in a position to influence the course of events. Pancreas chose the latter and he told the President so, immediately.

When the president left the hotel room, Pancreas telephoned the Chancellor and informed him of his change of mind. He also telephoned his wife and children and told them to start making arrangements to leave Britain and join him in his motherland.

That marked the sudden rise of Pancreas to the helm of politics. When the President bestowed on him the honorary title of Major General, the name became a household feature in Nigeria. Although

his role was mainly that of presidential advisor on military affairs, Pancreas crossed the boundary and often engaged in development matters. His advice to the President in this regard was always in the perspective of his vision for Africa.

As years went by Pancreas developed more and more interest in politics. He had by now established himself as a force to reckon within Nigeria's military and political circles. He proved to be so popular in the army that he overshadowed the powers of the Chief of the Armed Forces and the President himself. This was enough reason to give the President the jitters as he clearly saw that his power was threatened. Although Pancreas was his friend, he was becoming just too powerful to be retained in a senior position. Something had to be done fast!

Sure enough, something was done pretty fast. The President announced through the national radio that Pancreas had been relieved of all his duties in the government 'in the interest of state security'.

Pancreas received the news when he was playing a game of chess with his wife at their home in Lagos and he was rather surprised. But he had somehow been expecting it for he had noticed a sudden change in the President's attitude towards him for some time and he had guessed the reason.

Elsewhere in the country, news of his sacking was received with great shock. Most people admired Pancreas for his pragmatism and they ranked him first on their list of the few people who they thought were capable of taking the mantle of leadership in the country.

In the army barracks, news of his sacking was not received well. Tempers flared and emotions ran wild. Pancreas had helped a great deal in improving conditions of service for the soldiers. Just a month ago, he had managed to argue out their case for a salary increase. In view of this they were all unanimous in thought; they just could not watch as he was being tossed out of his military throne. They had to do something quickly and they did it!

The entire army took up arms against the President in a well planned revolt. They had to remove him from power and replace him with their man, Pancreas. The army seized the President's official residence and captured him. Then they took over the National Broadcasting Station

and announced to the public both on the national radio and television, that the army had dethroned the President because of what they called 'his dictatorial tendencies' and replaced him with the right man to lead the nation. That man, they said was Pancreas Atemi who had been sacked for his positive contribution to the general welfare of the nation.

By the time Pancreas and his family were receiving the news of the *coup d' état*, a military limousine was cruising to a halt at his house. Seconds later a man walked out of the car and headed towards the house. He pressed the door bell button and Pancreas opened the door for him.

"Are you Major General Pancreas Atemi?" he asked.

"Yes I am," Pancreas answered.

"You're now the President of Nigeria," the man said confidently. Pancreas did not know exactly which word to use. He had learnt from the television that the army had overthrown the government and they wanted him to take over the country's leadership. He had been so confused that he had not jogged his mind to think of the challenge ahead. However, a thought struck him. How nice it would be to be President!

"What do you want me to do?" he asked the military officer calmly. "You're required to go and address the nation," the man said.

Pancreas gazed at him, dazed and unable to pick out his next words. The man noticed his nervousness and patted him on the back, motioning him to follow him to the car. They walked to the car, Pancreas sat at the back left side and the man drove away quickly.

As the car burned the miles to the National Broadcasting Corporation, Pancreas saw many soldiers patrolling the streets while civilians danced in celebration. He suddenly began to feel courageous and the nervousness that had engulfed him began to fade. In its place came a strong quest for power. Even before he was confirmed as President, his mind drifted to his ambition of implementing what he viewed as a "vision for Africa".

Pancreas was trembling slightly as he held the microphone to address Nigerians through the National radio. However, after he spoke the first few words he began to gain confidence in himself. His speech was brief. He talked against the ills committed by the former

President and promised that he would be prosecuted immediately for his malpractices. As he said that he could visualise the psychology of the masses who had for long been fed up with dictatorship. Everyone was probably clapping when they imagined the former president, who had virtually controlled the destiny of everyone, actually facing a judge to answer for his crimes.

Pancreas then thanked the army and the entire population for the confidence they had placed in him as their leader. He promised to rule justly and to streamline the politics of the country. Meanwhile, he urged everyone to remain calm and peaceful as everything was under control.

* * * * *

After he had been in office for one month, Pancreas had decided that it was time to implement his dream for Africa. He decided to call an all African leaders' conference in Lagos to discuss how to hasten Africa's development by ensuring the total utilisation of the continent's vast resources. By this time he had already cultivated a respectable image in the continent's political scene. So when the African leaders received the invitation in the meeting, they came without fail.

At the conference, Pancreas raised the issue of the establishment of free trade in the continent, describing the move as very important for the economic take off. He argued that by eliminating all custom duty on goods sold by one country to another there would be a free flow of goods from one part of the continent to the other and by extension, an equitable distribution and utilisation of the continent's resources. As the debate raged on it was suggested that a body be formed to oversee Africa's trade with the rest of the world. The gist of this was that by withholding the supply of some resources vital for the survival of the western world, Africa would be able to influence the price at which her goods were sold on the international market. This, it was argued, would lead to tremendous economic development.

To achieve this ambitious economic programme, all the leaders were unanimous in their support of the fact that the African Development Bank, the only bank operating on a continental scale in Africa, would have to play an increased role in financing the economies of individual countries through the extension of credit to their development

programme especially in the industrial sector to enable them to realise the goal of utilising their resources to the maximum. It was this that thrust Professor Edward Waihenya onto the scene.

When the Nigerian President consulted him and briefed him on the recommendations of the African Leaders' Conference, Edward was elated to learn that his bank had a role to play in the ambitious economic programme for Africa. He was sure that if the plan was well implemented it would make Africa an economic giant on the global scene. From an economic perspective, Edward was sure the bank would earn a lot in terms of interest by extending credit on a larger scale. All the credit for sound management would be accorded to him as the bank's chairman.

Edward knew that at that time, the bank's financial position would make it difficult to extend further credit. He also knew that it would be weakness if the bank would not be able to fulfil the noble goals the African leaders had entrusted it with. This would portray a negative image of the bank and even of himself as Chairman. He had to do something quickly to get money for the bank.

Earlier when Edward was made Chairman of the African Development Bank, he had received many congratulatory messages from various quarters but one was unique in its own way. It was the message sent by a Mr Roger Mathews from America.

Mathews Roger, one of the most powerful tycoons in the whole world had his immense power stemming from his giant empire Romthex International, a multinational company which controlled businesses ranging from banking to real estate and even the lucrative oil exploration. He had over the last few years developed a keen interest in expanding his empire to Africa and had indeed set up a number of investments in various countries on the continent. His explanation was that he wanted to get wealthier by having an expanded investment base. It was from this financial giant, the self-declared lover of Africa, that Edward decided to solicit for funds.

Edward had written a letter to Mathews seeking audience for himself and a delegation from his bank. Presently, the results of the request were out and they were positive. In the next six days he would be meeting Mathews at his headquarters in Washington.

The euphoria that had been elicited by this call from Washington gradually died, and Edward's active mind assumed normalcy. As he worked out the best ways to react to the present development, an idea struck his mind with clarity. His only daughter, Nancy Wanja, had just joined university and he was yet to give her a present for passing her exams well. Now, he thought, this was the chance to do so!

* * * * *

In room 109B of the University of Nairobi's Women's Hall, two people were busy at a reading table compiling the last draft of a research on social stratification in modern Africa which they had been conducting for the last three weeks. The two were Douglas Kamau and Nancy Wanja.

The atmosphere of seriousness which reigned in the room was interrupted by two faint knocks on the door. Nancy shifted her gaze from the fullscap on which she had been writing and looked up. Then she invited the visitor in.

The door opened faintly and a woman whom she recognised as the hall's custodian walked in.

"Are you Nancy Wanja?" the custodian asked.

"Yes madam," Nancy replied wondering what was afoot.

"There is a telephone call for you in my office," the custodian said.

"Thank you very much," Nancy said as she prepared to rise.

The custodian left, closing the door behind her. Nancy then walked quickly down the stairs to the custodian's office

She picked up the receiver and said, "Hallo."

"Hallo Nancy," the voice on the other end said.

She recognised it immediately as that of her father.

"Hallo dad. Is mum fine?" Nancy asked.

"She is fine," her father replied.

"I'm also fine," Nancy said.

"How is education treating you?" he asked.

"It's quite a challenge. Things are not all that easy," Nancy said with a smile.

"That is exactly what it means to be in the university. You don't get anything on a silver platter. You have to sweat for survival," her father said.

"I'm working harder and harder everyday," Nancy continued.

"Good. I'm proud of your industriousness. And by the way did I give you a present for your remarkable achievement of making it to the university?" he asked.

"Have you forgotten that you bought me several dresses and opened a fat bank account for me, dad?" she asked.

"Oh, yes I did that but I don't think it is enough," her father insisted.

"What is enough if that isn't, dad?" Nancy asked surprised.

"I have another present for you," he said.

"What is it this time?" Nancy asked.

Edward paused to clear his throat.

"I'm going to meet the executive chairman of Romthex International in Washington on Monday and I'd like you to accompany me on the visit," he said in a well calculated voice.

"You're going to meet Roger Mathews?" Nancy asked in apparent surprise.

She seemed to have forgotten her father's latter statement about her accompanying him.

"Yes," he answered.

"What are you going to meet him for?" Nancy asked excitedly.

She knew Mathews and the immense power he wielded.

"Official business," her father said.

Nancy knew exactly what that meant. He was not the type to disclose official information even to his daughter.

"You want me to accompany you?" she asked quickly.

"That is my present for you, Nancy," her father said.

"I'll consider the offer. I've to consider the effect of the visit on my academic work," she said at last.

"What do you mean?" her father asked in surprise.

"I mean, that I should think about the impact my absence from class will have on my academic performance," Nancy replied.

"Sure, but don't forget that you don't have much time to think Nancy. The visit is only six days away," her father advised.

"I'll inform you of my decision tomorrow," Nancy finally said.

"Well, have a good time Nancy. I look forward to getting an answer from you. I know you won't refuse my present," he said.

"I'll come home tomorrow to tell you. Greet mum when you go home. Tell her I'm fine. Bye."

"Bye, Nancy," he said and she heard the telephone click as her father replaced the receiver.

Then she replaced hers. Overwhelmed by excitement, Nancy quickly walked back to her room.

"Who was it?" Douglas asked as she came back to the room.

He noticed that she was happy and he concluded that the call must have been a good one.

"My father," Nancy answered.

"He must have told you something good. You look very happy," Douglas said.

"He is going to meet Roger Mathews in Washington," Nancy explained.

"Roger Mathews, the American tycoon you mean?" Douglas asked in excitement mixed with curiosity.

"Yes, and he wants me to accompany him," Nancy said.

"To the States?" Douglas asked excitedly.

He rose from his seat, embraced Nancy and kissed her passionately.

"I want your advice Douglas," Nancy said when they stopped kissing.

"On what?" Douglas asked.

"On whether I should go or not," Nancy said.

Douglas gave her a sharp look which showed his surprise openly.

"Don't tell me that you're thinking of turning down such an offer which may be the only one in a lifetime, Nancy," Douglas said.

"But I had to get your advice before committing myself to the plan," she said defensively.

"When is the visit supposed to start?" Douglas asked.

"Monday next week," Nancy answered quickly.

"So you only have six days before you go to Washington?" Douglas asked jokingly.

"Stop teasing me. I'm seeking your advice," Nancy said.

"I would be nuts to tell somebody to forego such a chance," Douglas said with a broad smile. He was openly happy.

"So I should go?" Nancy asked yet again.

"Exactly," Douglas said.

"What about my academic work? Will it not be affected by my absence from the lectures?" Nancy asked.

"That depends on how long you are going to stay there," Douglas said. "I guess an official visit shouldn't be too long. That shouldn't affect your academic work. Besides, you'll have my notes to read."

"Thank you very much for your advice," Nancy said with relief evident in her voice.

Douglas kissed her once again and then he talked in a low, serious tone, "Visiting America will mean a lot Nancy."

Prediction.

Chapter Three

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi teemed with activity. The hustle and bustle of its daily routine was in full swing as people moved up and down the corridors at the same time. Planes touched down and others took off, leaving behind thunderous noises which drowned the roar of cars moving about. Among the cars were three sleek limousines which drove into the airport's VIP parking lot and their engines went dead almost in unison.

From the first two came exited three men and one woman. The men wore immaculate suits which cut out business-like figures, further enhanced by the executive briefcases they held firmly. The woman was of middle age and she wore a shiny silk dress which matched her black wig and fairly beautiful features. She was Jane Wambui the personal secretary to the Chairman of the African Development Bank. The three men were Joseph Mwangi, the bank's Vice Chairman Ian Mbugua, the Chief Accountant and Bedan Waweru, the bank's Senior Economic Advisor.

From the third car came Professor Edward Waihenya followed by his wife Emily and seconds later, their daughter Nancy Wanja and her boyfriend Douglas Kamau.

The eight people walked briskly to the VIP waiting lounge while two of the limousines pulled out of the parking lot and drove out of the airport, leaving behind the third. Nancy and Douglas sat together and talked in low tones as her parents conversed jovially with the other members of the bank's delegation.

About ten minutes later, a voice boomed through the public address system to announce that flight G2 39B was ready and asked the passengers prepare to board the plane. Edward, burning with suppressed excitement, rose and motioned the others to get on their feet and walk to the plane. He threw a glance at Douglas and patted him gently on the shoulder.

"Have a good time at the University, Douglas," he said.

Douglas just smiled and looked at him straight in the face.

"Thank you very much sir, I wish you a safe flight."

"Have a good time, Douglas," Nancy's mother said and shook his hand.

"Thank you very much," Douglas said.

Edward and Emily then began to move out of the lounge. Nancy and Douglas followed suit and in a moment they were at the customs desk. When the group was cleared, Nancy embraced Douglas and kissed him in a sudden burst of passion. Edward gazed at the pair and smiled broadly before nudging his wife, who quickly turned to watch the pair.

"Did I ever shower you with such kisses in public?" Edward asked her cheekily.

Emily laughed and said in a near whisper,

"Can't you remember that time in the lecture room?" and they both laughed.

Nancy relaxed her embrace and said in a soft voice, "I'll miss you Douglas."

When she turned she met the four eyes of her parents looking at them impatiently.

"Let's get moving Nancy," Edward said.

"Have a nice time in America," Douglas told her as she walked towards her parents.

The entire delegation then moved hurriedly to a Kenya Airways airbus which was on the runway ready to leave. When they were at the last step of the plane's entrance, Edward, Emily and Nancy stopped and waved at Douglas. He waved back and watched as they went inside. Then he walked briskly to the VIP parking lot where the third limousine was still waiting for him.

As the car pulled out of the parking lot and drove into the main road heading out of the airport Douglas suddenly began to feel important. A feeling of disbelief buoyed by great happiness filled him. He found it hard to believe that a man of his humble beginnings could rise so suddenly to rub shoulders with renown figures on the national scene. What complicated matters more was the manner in which it had happened. At best he could only describe it as a practical miracle. Perhaps, his falling in love was not in itself unusual, in thought, but

what surprised him was her parent's recognition of their affair, which was a new phenomenon in Kenya's social landscape.

The acknowledgement had come as a direct result of Nancy's obsessive belief in openness as far as her social life was concerned. This belief in not hiding things did not stem from a religious conviction but from her secular principal of "peace in the world". She believed that it was only by people living in peace that they could enjoy their earthly stay fully, however shortlived that may be. As a matter of deep conviction and quest to work actively for the promotion and realisation of this belief, Nancy set out to do only those things that rhymed with her philosophy. Among them was a desire to forge a good relationship with her parents so as to enhance understanding at home.

Ever since her teens, she knew her parents were opposed to secret affairs between young people especially teenagers as they claimed it led to a deterioration of academic work. Even now that she was in the university she knew that her parents would still not advocate for such affairs. To counter this, she decided to let them know of her affair with Douglas by introducing him to them. This she reasoned would have a positive effect on them as it would present the image of an open, sincere and mature daughter.

When she told Douglas about her intention, he was surprised at first and opposed the idea, reasoning that like most parents, they would go wild on hearing such a thing. Douglas could not imagine any parent encouraging a daughter to engage in a relationship with a man when she had just joined university and was therefore not well prepared for marriage.

From the perspective of Kenya's social scene, Douglas was wholly right in his judgement. Most parents who represented the old generation tended to subject the issue of love affairs to the cultural viewpoint leading to an open clash with their children who were the representatives of the transition to a new generation. These children had mostly embraced the bulk of western values which viewed romance as a constituent of social health.

But, as Nancy argued, it was high time the society changed and it could only change through the efforts of the young generation in trying

their best to convince their parents that social change was inevitable in society. She managed to impress upon Douglas the need to break the news to her parents and he reluctantly agreed.

* * * * *

As Nancy had promised her father when he telephoned her about the visit to America, she went home the following day to tell him of her decision. The only thing she had not yet told him was that she would not be going home alone. She would be accompanied by her boyfriend Douglas Kamau.

Nancy's parents were surprised when they saw their daughter walk in with a stranger but they held their curiosity at bay and waited to get an explanation. To their surprise, Nancy seemed confident and unperturbed by the present drama. She introduced Douglas to them, describing him as 'a classmate' and at last epitomising the occasion with a phrase which was the gist of the introduction:

"I am in love with him," She said

Her father and mother exchanged quick glances which could only be interpreted to mean immense surprise. That was the last phrase they expected from their daughter.

"We are glad to meet you, Douglas," Nancy's father said. "Feel at home."

"Thank you very much. I'm glad to meet you too," Douglas said.

"So you come from Witeithie village?" Nancy's mother had asked. She couldn't help wondering how Douglas could have come to fall in love with Nancy yet they came from very different social backgrounds. But she knew better than to ask.

"Yes, I've lived there throughout my life, but I went to Alliance High School for my O level and A level," Douglas said.

"Congratulations for making it to university," Edward said. "It's a show of academic excellence and a great achievement."

"Thank you," Douglas said with a broad smile.

"Douglas is different from me on the positive side, mum," Nancy said.

"Why do you think so? Did he get more points than you in the examination?" her mother asked.

Nancy smiled and stole a glance at Douglas.

"Not on the academic side," Nancy said. "On the social side. He is used to the grim reality of life."

"What exactly do you mean?" Nancy's father asked.

"He has never been driven to school in an expensive car as I was. I think that is the best life," Nancy said.

Her mother smiled. She was now used to her daughter's revolutionary ideas on wealth. It surprised her but she was happy. She was happy because that was a sure sign that Nancy was not a spoilt child even though she had been brought up in immense wealth.

However, her husband hated the idea because it stood in his way to the attainment of prestige. He would have liked Nancy to live an expensive life so that the other people in his class would know that he was in that class truly by right.

"You should get the experience from him and know that the world isn't just a bed of beautiful roses," her mother said as Nancy smiled.

"I already know that by now. I know that the world is unfair," Nancy said.

Her parents smiled. Seconds later, the maid brought some soft drinks and placed them on the table. She was about to start serving them when Nancy motioned her not to. She rose and served the drinks herself. Her parents watched in silence and their hearts warmed with joy. They were happy that their daughter could display such an advanced degree of social maturity.

When Nancy and Douglas went back to college, Nancy having confirmed to her father that she would be accompanying him to America, her parents were left floating in a sea of surprise which they had concealed all that time. They discussed in detail the new turn of events and were unanimous in their resolve not to interfere with Nancy's love life.

"Could it be mere infatuation being confused for love by Nancy?" Emily had asked Edward.

The latter had expressed his hope that it was as genuine as it appeared. They decided to acknowledge the relationship and treat

Douglas as their son. That would be the only way to avoid hurting Nancy and in the process make her overact.

The following day Nancy and Douglas left Nairobi and took a bus to Witeithie village. It was now Douglas' turn to introduce Nancy to his mother.

Douglas' mother, just like Nancy's parents, was surprised when she saw Douglas accompanied by a girl, walk into her three-roomed house. Douglas introduced the girl as a classmate and, like Nancy had done, added a phrase which his mother least expected. The phrase elicited a response similar to that of Nancy's parents. Douglas' mother was surprised and could not help wondering how Douglas could have fallen in love with a girl whose social background was in total contrast with his. But she was happy; even more so because her son, the village hero, had gone further to demonstrate his worth by making the first step towards marriage, thus enhancing the degree of prestige and dignity bestowed on him. She was even happier that Douglas now had a chance to marry a girl from a rich family, which meant that his chances of making a big name for himself on the national economic scene were much higher.

For refreshments, they did not have mugs of Nescafe, chocolate, sausages or buttered bread as they had had in Nancy's home. Douglas' mother prepared for them tea without milk and a delicious dish of *irio* which were the only things she could afford. They ate as they chatted happily. Nancy was contented for she felt at home in that atmosphere. The distance from the usual affluence gave her psychological peace. She was happy that Douglas' mother appreciated her irrespective of her social background.

Before they left for the city, Douglas' mother wished Nancy a good time in America. Nancy thanked her, so full of excitement that their relationship had been acknowledged.

The following day, Edward went to collect Nancy in a limousine at the university as plans for the journey to America progressed. On Saturday, another limousine drove to the men's halls of residence and cruised to a halt at the parking lot of Hall Nine. The students, who were basking on the green lawn outside the hall, gazed at the car and myriad thoughts raced in their minds. Some clicked, others cursed and yet

others could be heard shouting in near whispers of anger, "exploiters," "capitalists," "white collar thieves," "Mercedes criminals," while others just gazed at the car with hateful eyes. Like most university students, they were radicals who loathed the country's rich people, branding them exploiters of the poor, and accusing them of enriching themselves as the poor sunk deeper into the dungeons of poverty and the vicious cycle of misery.

They watched as the driver left the car, walked briskly into the hall and started climbing the stairs. Soon, he was lost in the distance. Meantime, the students let out more clicks and curses while others even spat on the ground.

In room 106 Douglas sat at his reading table perusing through the pages of a magazine to which he wanted to contribute an article. His dream was to make a big name for himself in the international literary scene. The faint knock at his door almost took him by surprise. He had told most of his friends that he would be going to read in the library so that he could get enough time to read in his room uninterrupted. During his short spell at the university he had come to learn that concentration on one's studies could easily be hampered by social factors, among them the continuous influx of visitors to one's room. That was why he had deceived his friends. He considered it justified for it was in line with his policy of hard work on campus and seriousness in life.

When the first knock came his immediate thought was to ignore it and refuse to open the door but a latter thought made him to open it, after all, the visitor might not stay for long. He rose from his seat, took a sip from his glass of juice, and walked to the door holding a key in his hand. When he unlocked the door and pulled it open he was surprised to find an unfamiliar figure. It was that of a middle-aged man who wore a black *kaunda* suit and whose eyes were concealed behind a pair of dark glasses.

"Can I help you?" Douglas asked a note of unfamiliarity clearly evident in his voice.

"Are you Douglas Kamau?" the man asked.

"Yes," Douglas said, curiosity building within him.

"I've been sent to you by Professor Edward Waihenya," the man said.

Douglas' heart skipped a beat. What could have gone wrong? he wondered as he tried to appear calm.

"Welcome please," Douglas said and ushered the man inside.

"I've been sent to pick you up. The Professor would like you to escort them to the airport tomorrow," the visitor said as he sat down.

"He wants me to escort them to the airport?" he asked surprised.

"Yes, and we should be going immediately," the man answered.

"Let me get ready then we can leave," Douglas said.

He immediately changed into his best clothes and a few minutes later they were walking down the stairs and out of the hall. They got into the limousine and Douglas was driven to Nancy's home in Lavington.

Once there, he was warmly welcomed by all, including Nancy. The following day he would accompany them to the airport from where the family would fly to America,

Douglas thought of all that had taken place as he was being driven back to the university in the exquisite limousine. The feeling of importance could not leave him, however much he tried. Throughout the journey, his mind was adrift in a sea of deep thought, as he tried hard to understand his new status. By the time the limousine stopped outside Hall Nine, his mind was miles and miles away. He was brought back to the present by the driver patting him gently on the shoulders and saying faintly, "Here we are."

Chapter Four

Professor Edward Waihenya and his delegation arrived in Washington DC on Sunday night. The sky was clear, so clear that even before the pilot said fasten your seat-belts, they knew from the complex maze of buildings below that they were about to land. They immediately checked in at Webster Hotel which was not very far from the airport.

Although it was nearly midnight and they were exhausted by the long flight, Edward and his fellow bank officials did not go to bed early. It was only Nancy and her mother who did, both of whom were complaining of exhaustion. Edward, his personal secretary Jane Wambui, Vice Chairman, Chief Accountant and Senior Economic Advisor met to do the final touches on their presentations to Romthex International. Edward checked and counter checked the various documents which were to be presented. They all had to be in order so as to show that the bank was really in need of financial reinforcement and that the project it would undertake was both viable and well managed.

When Edward was finally satisfied, he went to bed. The following day a limousine from a car rental company cruised to a halt at the hotel's parking lot as instructed. Edward and his fellow ADB officials were ready to be driven to the headquarters of Romthex International. Meanwhile, Nancy and her mother took a taxi and went to visit a museum in the heart of Washington.

* * * * *

At the headquarters of Romthex, two groups sat round a table. Professor Waihenya and his colleagues from the ADB sat on one side while Roger Mathews and three of his senior staff sat on the other.

"Welcome gentlemen. I hope you had a good night's rest," were Mr Mathews opening remarks.

"Thank you Mr Mathews. We are very happy to be here. Our night was good," Edward answered on behalf of the group.

"Edward I would suggest that you introduce the members of your team so that we can get down to business," Mr Mathews said.

"It will be a pleasure," Edward said smiling.

"First is my vice chairman, Mr Joseph Mwangi," Edward said as Mathews nodded in acknowledgement. "Our chief accountant Mr Ian Mbugua and my senior economic advisor Mr Bedan Waweru."

"I'm glad to meet you gentlemen," Mathews said. "Perhaps I should also introduce my group. First is the Chief of Operations, Africa region, Mr Ignatius Blackburn, then the Senior Financial Controller, Mr Warren Robins and this one here is my Senior Economic Advisor, Mr David Arnett."

"We are all glad to meet you gentlemen," Edward said and they nodded in acknowledgement.

"Like I told you Professor Waihenya, I'm very glad to have you here to discuss the issue of development in Africa. I understand that you wanted to talk to me specifically, about Romthex International advancing a certain loan to your bank so as to enable it to expand its services in the development of the continent," Mathews said.

"That is true, Mr Mathews," Edward said. "A situation has arisen where my bank is faced with the tough challenge of instituting a tremendous expansion of her operations so as to realise a very important economic goal which has been set in motion in the continent."

"Which are the specific areas that your bank views as being in dire need of reinforcement?" Arnett asked, his glasses already placed on the table.

"At present, the bank intends to expand its loan scheme programme with the aim of advancing financial assistance to African countries to enable them accelerate their economic growth," Edward replied.

"We are aware that Africa, through the efforts of the Nigerian President, has come up with an ambitious programme aimed at creating a strong Pan-African coalition," Mathews noted. "We at Romthex International are happy that the continent has at last realised the need to wake up and make up for lost time, and we hope that at the end of the day the plan will emerge as a total success."

"It is a very challenging plan which needs time and immense resources to realise," Bedan Waweru said.

"How serious are the African leaders in their commitment to the success of the new plan?" Warren asked. "You know that the plan as it stands doesn't have a single dimension. Politics has to come in and manifest its influence either positively or negatively. I tend to hold the view that it will make no sense at all to advance money to your bank if the goal of bringing economic recovery to the continent will be hampered by a political situation. It'll be a mere waste of resources."

"I understand your fears Mr Warren," Edward said, "I can't deny the fact that Africa's political situation is unpredictable, but my bank is committed to monitoring closely the situation in each country to assess the chances of success of any development project before we undertake to commit funds to it. We will give financial assistance only to those countries which have a conducive atmosphere for development and hope that, in due course, all the leaders will be committed to make it possible."

"How much money would you like Romthex to advance your bank, professor Waihenya?" Mathews asked.

"Well, the estimate is based on a five-year plan of action and the amount is quite substantial. Could you read out the plan, Mr Mbugua," Edward requested. Ian Mbugua opened the file and put on his reading glasses. Everyone was attentive as he began reading the bank's five-year plan.

"The African Development Bank currently operates at a net capital of ten million dollars annually. With the new plan for Africa's economic recovery, the current net capital cannot be enough to bring any additional contribution to the process. We have divided the continent into zones to facilitate our assessment. One is the agricultural zone, and the other the mining zone. The first consists of countries that are well suited for agricultural production and the latter of those that have rich minerals deposits. We have established that if we pump financial resources into these two sectors, there will be increased production and better utilisation of resources on the continent, and more vigorous free trade among member countries. The agricultural zone will need a reinforcement of over one and a half billion dollars over the same period. In total, the African Development Bank requires at least three and a half billion dollars as a loan."

Mathews took a deep breath and stole a glance at his three colleagues. Three and a half billion dollars is a huge sum of money, he thought.

"Three and half billion dollars?" he asked aloud.

"Is it too much sir?" Edward asked in a serious tone.

"The Board of Directors of Romthex International will have to be convinced that the programme stands a chance of success before they can approve the loaning of such a huge sum of money," Blackburn said.

"Have you worked out the repayment procedure?" Warren asked.

"We have taken utmost care in the selection of projects which we plan to finance. In selecting the projects we have assessed the profit potential carefully," Edward said. "Based on this assumption our assessment is that the African Development Bank will be able to repay the loan to Romthex over a five-year stretch, after a three-year grace period."

"Do you mean the repayment of the money will pose no danger to the financial position of your bank?" Blackburn asked hesitantly.

"We are confident there will be no problem, Mr Blackburn," Mwangi answered confidently.

"I tend to think that the board of directors of Romthex will be reluctant to vote for the loaning of such a huge sum of money unless there is a clearcut indication that the programme is workable, both in theory and in practice," Mathews said.

"I can assure you Mr Mathews that my bank will do everything possible to avert any possible negative consequence that may compromise the plan," Edward said.

"As I told you Professor Waihenya, I'm committed to helping Africa in her economic recovery programme and I will therefore support any positive attempt that is aimed at achieving this noble goal. It is in this light that I have been investing heavily in the continent's economic growth. But in this particular case, I must tell you that the nature of the plan is such that it's not I as the owner of Romthex International who has the sole power to give the approval on such a big undertaking. Such a decision can only be made by the Board of Directors. I can't promise at this stage that the Board will make a decision in your favour. All I

can promise and commit myself to with certainty is to impress on the members of the Board the need to make a positive response."

"We will appreciate that, Mr Mathews," Edward said.

"I think we will need a draft of your bank's financial plan to present to the board Mr Mbugua," Blackburn said.

Mbugua nodded, closed the file which lay stretched on the table and gave it to Blackburn. Mathews then looked up, cleared his throat with a slight cough, and faced Edward.

"Well, I think the meeting can now be regarded as over, Professor Waihenya. I will as promised commit myself to ensuring your request is granted. Meanwhile, it's my pleasure to invite you all to a dinner party I'm hosting in your honour at Jennings Hotel tonight."

"Thank you for the invitation. We shall be glad to attend," Edward said. "My wife and daughter will particularly get a good tale to tell back home."

"It will be a pleasure to meet them," Mathews said.

* * * * *

Jennings Hotel radiated with warmth and colour. It was one of the most posh five-star hotels in Washington. Most American executives preferred to hold dinner parties for foreign dignitaries and other important visitors there.

Beautiful flowers of different shades shot out of special vases lining the length of the hotel's meeting hall as their sweet scent filled the air. The chairs were beautiful and the tables were made of the best quality mahogany wood. The carpet was rich Arabian. It reflected a sparkling glare of rich colours which blended well to form a magnificent radiance.

On a raised platform was a triangular table where two groups of people sat facing each other. Roger Mathews sat at one side with some of his senior staff who included Blackburn, Warren and Arnett.

On the opposite end was Edward, his wife Emily, daughter Nancy, the ADB vice chairman Joseph Mwangi, senior accountant Ian Mbugua, economic adviser Bedan Waweru and his personal secretary Jane Wambui.

On another part of the hall sat the invited guests. They included other staff members from Romthex and many of Mathews' friends. Many eyes were fixed on the raised platform as the guests sipped their drinks leisurely. However, although they seemed to be looking at the entire platform, a keen observer would not have failed to notice that their gazes were resting squarely on Mathews and questions were beginning to form in their minds. There was something a bit unusual about Mathews and everyone knew it without saying it. Mathews was staring fixedly at Nancy and everyone could discern a new warmth in his eyes.

However, Mathews was oblivious of the spectacle he was creating. His mind had come to a near standstill and was now only concentrating on Nancy. It was the first time he had an intense admiration for a girl in a long time. After a lapse of over ten years, and currently at the age of forty one, the romantic drive in him had slowed. He was surprised that a deep affection was enveloping him. By all standards, his feelings for Nancy could only be described as mere infatuation and however hard he tried he could not escape from that fact. Perhaps, infatuation is not just for teenagers, he reasoned, partly to justify a phenomenon which his conscience viewed as a betrayal of his age and social status. A strong thought told him that as a respected public figure and a role model of success, it was not proper to fall victim to infatuation, more so to a girl over 20 years his junior. But could the sound moral conscience override his feelings?

It had all started with a surprisingly sharp suddenness that had taken him aback to a point where his emotions were rent a vicious blow. By the time Mathews left the headquarters of Romthex International earlier in the day after meeting the ADB delegation, he had developed a positive perception of Professor Edward Waihenya.

He saw him as a dignified and charismatic person and therefore one worth a dignitary's treatment. However, Mathews had hardly thought of the fact that the professor would be accompanied by his wife and daughter to the party. Indeed, it was not the first time that a foreign delegation was attending a dinner party he had hosted and they were accompanied by their family members.

The difference here was that the moment he arrived at Jennings Hotel and sat at the triangular table where he had sat on many occasions before, his eyes, out of natural curiosity, swept through the ADB delegation and sighted Edward's wife Emily and daughter Nancy. It was on Nancy that they rested.

Mathews could not help admiring her exquisite beauty and her lovely figure, which he could have sworn surpassed that of any other girl he had seen before. She wore a silk dress laced with shiny bronze strips along its length. Her hair was beautifully curled and it enhanced her fair complexion. Perhaps what touched Mathews most was her electric smile. A smile so pure that it suddenly stirred in him romantic feelings which paralysed his emotions. He lost control of his immediate environment as his mind was overcome by affection. He was not even aware that he was staring, and thus risking embarrassment in front of the guests.

As the waiters continued serving drinks, the master of ceremony took over the party. The first item in the agenda was to ask the dignitaries to introduce themselves to the other guests. The Romthex group started, then came the ABD group. When it was Nancy's turn, Mathews could not help but show his admiration openly. Some of the guests noticed this but they kept their knowledge to themselves.

Soon, both Mathews and Edward delivered speeches. Edward thanked Romthex International for its commitment to helping Africa solve her development problems. He expressed hope that there would be more co-operation between Romthex and the ADB in order to steer Africa to further heights of progress. Mathews congratulated Edward for his dedication to the noble course of developing Africa and he pledged to do everything possible to ensure that Romthex participated in the continent's development in future.

Before the party ended, Mathews whispered to his personal secretary who sat beside him, "I would like to have a word with Professor Waihenya in my office after this."

The secretary nodded and presently walked to Edward to relay the information.

* * * * *

As Nancy and her mother were getting out of a sleek limousine at Webster Hotel, Edward was having a hearty chat with Mathews in his office at Romthexheadquaters.

"It is a great pleasure to meet you again Professor," Mathews said as he sipped his cold beer. "It has always been my policy to work for the development of Africa in all spheres. Africa lacks men of commitment but I can assure you that you are a rare breed. Together with the Nigerian President Pancreas Atemi, you can steer the continent out of her economic mess and you are the sort of people I would like to work with in my efforts to help Africa."

"Thank you for the compliment Mr Mathews but I don't think I deserve all that praise. It's too much for the little effort I have put in so far," Edward said modestly.

Mathews smiled.

"That little effort stands out from others, which are usually in smaller proportions and lacking in commitment," Mathews said.

"I'll be glad to work with you in our chosen path of commitment to the African problem," Edward said.

"I appreciate the high degree of confidence in you. It is essential for the success of any venture," Mathews said.

Edward smiled behind closed lips.

"And by the way professor, would you mind spending a few days with your family at my Atlanta home?"

Mathews' question caught Edward off guard. Spend a few days at Mathews' home in Atlanta? It seemed somehow unreal to Edward. What special feature in him had made him qualify for such an invitation? It was not as if he knew this most influential man on earth on a personal basis?

Before long his mind raced back to the dinner party at Jennings Hotel and he recalled the silent drama that had transpired. Edward could have sworn he had seen Mathews staring at Nancy in a manner that appeared to be out of the ordinary. Could the invitation be a follow up of the Jennings Hotel scene? he wondered.

"We would be glad to spend a few days at your home, Mr Mathews. I'm sure that will also enhance our relationship at the personal level," he said.

"Thank you very much for accepting the invitation. I will send a car to pick you at your hotel. Meanwhile, I will inform my wife that she should expect some visitors," Mathews said.

Chapter Five

At the Webster Hotel, Edward Waihenya looked at his wife and daughter who sat comfortably on a sofa in their suite.

"I have good news for you my dears. Can you guess what it is?" he asked.

Although he was anxious, his voice did not betray him.

"Let me guess, dad," Nancy excitedly said. "You have succeeded in convincing the American tycoon to loan the money to ADB."

Edward smiled.

"Nothing to do with that Nancy. It's something much more exciting and worth notice," he said.

"What is it then?" Nancy's mother asked.

"We shall spend a few days at Mathews' home in Atlanta," Edward answered, emphasising the sentence to make his message sink into their minds.

Nancy and her mother exchanged glances and questions could be seen forming on their curious faces.

"What?" they both said surprised

"We've been invited to spend some days at Mathews' home in Atlanta," Edward repeated.

Emily and Nancy just stared in disbelief.

"The invitation is from Mathews himself. I was with him at his office and that is where he communicated it," Edward said.

"It must be wonderful to get such an invitation from one of the most influential Americans," Nancy said with a smile.

"He is a good man and worth the highest degree of praise. Mr Mathews is a person of high integrity," Edward noted.

"When are we going there?" Emily asked curiously.

"A car will be coming to pick us up any time from now," Edward said.

"How many days shall we spend there, dad?" Nancy asked.

"Several. Why? You seem concerned," Edward said.

"I've to go back to college to avoid piling up more work than I already have," Nancy explained.

"Never mind. Everything will be okay," Edward said. "Let us begin packing now. The car might be on its way."

"Are we going with the other ADB officials?" Emily asked.

"No, Mathews has only invited the ADB chairman and his family," Edward said proudly.

Nancy threw a sharp inquisitive glance at him.

"What do you mean, dad?" she asked.

"Just that," Edward replied.

"I mean, why were the other banks officials excluded from the invitation?" Nancy persisted.

"The best I can do is to guess, and the best guess I can make is that Mathews was using his freedom of choice. One invites the friends he likes and can't be accused of being biased. My other guess is that his home could be small and can only accomodate a few visitors comfortably. So he decided to choose those to invite from the highest level of the bank's leadership. Can you formulate another guess?" Edward asked with a broad smile.

Emily cast a glance at Nancy and then at Edward. When her eyes met his, Edward knew what she was guessing. He knew that she too had noticed the unusual stares Mathews had been giving Nancy at the party and she was now connecting that scene to the abrupt invitation. However, she couldn't say it and he knew it. It had to remain behind closed lips.

"I don't have any more guesses. I can only say that we are very lucky to have been invited," Emily said.

She knew that she wasn't being truthful.

Edward was in the process of saying more words when he heard a knock on the door. He quickly paced to the door and pulled it open. Standing there was a middle-aged man who wore a blue double breast suit.

"What can I do for you?" Edward asked.

"I've been sent to come and take you to the airport," the man answered.

"Right now?" Edward asked.

"Yes, Mathews will be joining you there in the next half an hour."

"Give us a few minutes please. We were just getting ready. Get on the move Emily," Edward said excitedly.

Nancy and Emily were just gazing at him and the man.

"When you're through just come down to the ground floor. I'll be waiting in the parking lot in a black limousine," the man said.

"We shall be down soon," Edward answered, unable to conceal the excitement in his voice.

When the man left the room, Edward closed the door then, faced his wife and his daughter.

"The visit is for real," he said.

Nancy smiled and looked at her mother.

"So you had doubts about it?" Emily asked.

Edward just smiled.

"Not at all but I was also caught up in excitement," he said.

In the next few minutes the three had packed their bags and moved out of the hotel room. They took the lift to the ground floor and Edward walked to the front desk to check out of the hotel. He then joined Nancy and her mother and together they walked to the parking lot where a black limousine was waiting.

The man, who was at the driver's seat, got out and helped them load the luggage into the car's boot. Then they got in. Edward sat on the passenger's seat next to the chauffeur while Nancy and her mother sat at the back. Shortly, they were on their way to the airport.

* * * * *

As the black limousine cruised towards the airport, a telephone was ringing at Roger Mathews' grand mansion in Atlanta, Georgia. Joyce Mathews, who for five hours had been sitting on a sofa painting a Red Indian in war armour, let the telephone ring a fifth time before raising her head and glancing in its direction.

She hesitated a few more seconds, put her brushes beside the painting board, and walked over to pick up the telephone.

"Hallo," she said in a bored tone.

"Hallo Joyce," Mathews said from his office in Washington.

"Hallo. Anything new?" she asked.

"Not much, just that I am coming home right away with some

visitors from Africa."

"Visitors from Africa? A Head of State?" Joyce asked.

"Not really, the chairman of the African Development Bank, Professor Edward Waihenya and his family," Mathews answered.

"His whole family you mean?" Joyce asked in disbelief.

"Are you surprised?" Mathews asked casually.

"You know Africans are funny. They breed like rats. They think the only business in this world is to give birth," Joyce said.

Her disgust was loud and clear, and Mathews discerned a strong racist note in her words.

"He doesn't have a big family. Only a wife and a daughter," Mathews said.

"He is a good friend of yours it seems?"

"He is one of the people I admire in Africa," Mathews said.

"To the extent of inviting him to your home in the middle of the night?"

"Just what is the time in Atlanta?" He asked teasingly.

"Just what is the time in Washington?" she said easily.

Before long they were both laughing their heads off.

"Have a nice time, Joyce," Mathews said.

"And you have a nice journey," she said.

Mathews smiled as a click came sharply to his ear.

When he hung up, he fished out a handkerchief from his coat pocket and wiped off beads of sweat which were forming on his face. He knew the sweat was not the result of any stress of the day's workload. If he was frank he could have admitted that the conversation with his wife had somewhat bothered him. His nerves were excited when his mind raced back to Edward's daughter, making him debate against his will what his wife's reaction would be if she knew the reason he had invited this family to his home. He put the handkerchief back into the pocket, picked up the receiver again and pressed a two digit number to his secretary.

"Hallo," a voice on the other end said.

"Could you please cancel all my engagements for the next seven days," he said.

"What sir?" the secretary asked, surprised.

"That you cancel all my engagements for the next seven days," he said.

"What sir?" the secretary asked, surprised.

"That you cancel all my engagements for the next seven days," he repeated.

"But we cannot do that Mr Mathews. The President of Amoco International oil is supposed to see you tomorrow in connection with the oil exploration deal in Thailand," the secretary said.

"Just do as I say," Mathews ordered and banged the receiver.

* * * * *

At exactly forty minutes after midnight, Mathews' private jet touched down at the small airfield in his vast compound in Atlanta. The runway was lit by many strong bulbs which dispelled all traces of darkness. In the middle of the night-cum-day stood Joyce Mathews, wearing a heavy overcoat to keep off the cold that engulfed the night. Beside her were two men who would carry the luggage to the waiting cars.

The plane moved slowly along the runway and stopped a few metres from where Joyce stood. When the engine stopped running the passenger door was opened and Mathews walked out first, followed closely by Edward, his wife Emily and their daughter Nancy.

Mathews greeted the two men and his wife before the men walked into the plane and removed the luggage. Meanwhile, Mathews introduced his three visitors, describing Edward as one of his best friends in Africa. He expressed hope that they would have a good stay at his home. They were then driven to the house. On arrival, Joyce led the way along a tarmacked pathway sandwiched by beautiful lawns towards the entrance of the big mansion.

A man who stood at the door pressed a button at the side of the wall and it slowly flung open. They walked in, past a magnificently lit corridor and came to a living room whose furnishings radiated an affluent touch. The sofas covers were made of pure velvet with strips of bronze lacing that sent sparkling rays of light into the eyes of an observer. The carpet was pure giraffe skin and its beautiful patches combined well with the smoothness of the mahogany table.

"Would you like some coffee?" Joyce asked when they had sat down.

"Yes, please. It would be nice to have some coffee before retiring to bed. We're almost freezing," Mathews said.

Joyce walked out of the room and ten minutes later returned with a tray of steaming coffee which she served.

"Do you take coffee at college Nancy?" Mathews asked.

Nancy, who was sipping her coffee silently feeling rather nervous at the thought that she was in the home of one of the most influential men on earth, smiled.

"Very much. Kenya is one of the few countries in the world that produce good quality coffee," Nancy said in her usual cheerful voice which complimented her smile.

It made his emotions go wild and deluged his mind with wild thoughts.

"What is the name of your college Nancy?" Joyce asked curiously.

"The University of Nairobi," she answered confidently.

"And which course are you taking?" Joyce continued asking.

"Anthropology, at the University's Institute of African Studies." Mathews took a gulp of his coffee and faced Nancy.

"What do you study in anthropology?" he prodded.

"Anthropology is basically a wholistic study of human societies. We study the social, economic and political behaviour of people from medieval times to the present age of advanced industrial technology," she said as the others listened keenly.

"It must be an interesting course," Joyce commented.

"Very interesting and helpful. One gets to understand the world around him or her better," Nancy said.

"I had wanted her to take economics instead but she couldn't change her mind about anthropology being the best for her," Edward explained.

He was particularly addressing Mathews.

"When I was in college, my mentor wanted me to study engineering but I couldn't do it. I wanted to take a course of my choice, just like Nancy preferred anthropology to economics," Mathews said.

"What did you study instead?" Edward asked curiously.

"I studied political science at Harvard," Mathews answered.

They talked on for about twenty minutes before all the coffee was over. After that Joyce showed Nancy her room and then her parents theirs.

Soon, everyone was fast asleep.

* * * * *

In a room at Webster Hotel, four people were complaining bitterly.

"This is simply outrageous, obnoxious, disgusting, perturbing ..." Joseph Mwangi, the ADB vice chairman stuttered, his lips almost vibrating with the strong anger that simmered from within him.

"It is appalling, flabbergasting and remote from the slightest speck of logic," Bedan Waweru, the bank's senior economic adviser, blurted.

"I wonder how Sidney Sheldon would describe it in one of his best selling thrillers," Ian Mbugua said in a soft emotional voice.

Jane Wambui, Edward's personal secretary, sat on a sofa. She was silent as she listened to the three men discuss the sensitive issue at hand, more anger welling up in them as they heaped one negative adjective after another.

They all had good reasons to be angry. Edward had not even informed them that he would visit the Romthex chairman at his home in Atlanta. He had not even given them any instructions, yet he was the leader of their delegation. It was only in the middle of night when he was about to retire to bed in Atlanta that he had bothered to telephone the hotel to inform them of what was happening. In a brief conversation which he had with Mwangi, he had said that he would stay at Mathews' home for several days and that they should leave for Kenya at their convenience.

They were angry because they had not been invited to Mathews' home and Edward had failed to brief them on what was happening in his capacity as their leader. It was this that made them pour scorn on him for a good fraction of an hour as they sipped mugs of tea in Mwangi's room.

"Would I have done the same if I was the bank's chairman?" Mwangi asked with a slight laugh.

"Do you think you would?" Waweru asked.

"Can I say no really?" Mwangi replied, the laughter still on his lips. He was suddenly in an easy mood.

* * * * *

Nancy watched the tide moving closer and closer to the shore in a systematic ascent and descent of waves and felt a stream of excitement sweep up her spine. What a beautiful scene, she thought. The tide came slowly with its murmur increasing as it came nearer and nearer. Nancy stood still as the big mass of water hit hard against the shore and bounced back with equal force to meet yet another wave. For a moment there was a splash of water as more and more waves hit the shores but at last the water became calm and the sea resumed its normal tranquillity.

"What are you thinking about so seriously darling?" Nancy asked Douglas, who also stood watching the blue water engrossed in deep thoughts.

Nancy's question stirred him from his reverie and brought his mind to the present.

"Yes, my love, what is it?" Douglas asked in reply.

"You looked lost in thoughts," Nancy said. "What is it that is so serious you are thinking about?"

"My mother, darling. I can't stop thinking about her," Douglas said. "I must build her a multi-million mansion. I must carry her in my Mercedes Benz. I must do it Nancy. I really must."

"God is alive Douglas. All that is possible through His power. Let's go and collect shells," she said and held Douglas by the hand.

Hand in hand, they walked along the shore as a swarm of tourists also surged forward to collect cowrie shells which the tide had brought to the shore.

Nancy moved with the stream of people and collected three shells. Douglas got a star fish which was half buried in the sand. He was in the process of rushing to collect a cowrie shell a few metres away when he heard a piercing cry of pain from behind him. He turned quickly, only to see Nancy drop the shells she held in her hand and raise her leg.

Nancy felt a strong pain. Something sharp had pierced through her light sports shoes and got into her foot. She saw Douglas dash through the wet sand and hold her by the shoulders with one hand, examining the left foot from which blood was now slowly oozing.

A little while later a group of tourists crowding around her at the same time Douglas pulled off her shoe. There were consoling voices and in their midst she made out Douglas' voice which rang with vividness in her mind.

"Take it easy Nancy. It's not a serious injury," he said as he pulled out a small pin which had pierced into her foot.

As he said these words, Nancy felt the pain ebb slowly away though the blood was still trickling out. Then something warm touched her cheek and she felt her body temperature rise. She was sweating profusely. When she opened her eyes she saw the executive chairman of Romthex International standing beside her bed. It was then that she remembered that she was in Atlanta, at the home of Roger Mathews.

What a bad dream, Nancy thought. I am supposed to go to Mombasa with Douglas next week after I get back to Kenya. Will I have an accident? she wondered. Her mind was brought to present focus by the faint voice of Mathews.

"It's time to wake up Nancy," he said with a broad smile.

"What time is it?" Nancy asked.

They were the only words that came from her mouth. Could this be true? Nancy thought as she faced Mathews. My own father has never done this. Nancy could not recollect any single moment in her life when her father had come to her bedroom to tell her that it was time to wake up. Suddenly it dawned on her that Mathews was not an ordinary man. He was a very powerful person and perhaps could do anything. Perhaps I should not have negative thoughts about him, she thought, he is only being a good man to his visitors.

"It's eight o'clock in the morning," Mathews said with his usual broad smile.

Nancy looked at the wall clock. It was exactly eight o'clock.

"Well, I think I should be out of bed. I slept late and I think that must be why I've overslept," Nancy said with a wry smile.

"Breakfast is on the table," Mathews said, smiling yet again, and he took swift strides to the door.

Nancy watched him open the door and walk out briskly, closing it behind him. She then briefly covered her head with a blanket and a stream of thoughts started racing through her mind in a complex web of confusion. Slowly she threw off the blankets and got out of bed.

She was about to go to the wardrobe to get some clothes when thoughts of having a shower came to her mind. The bathing items were placed on a table not far from the bed. She put on sandals, took a towel and soap and walked to the exquisite bathroom that was adjacent to the bedroom.

As she pulled off her night gown and pressed the water button, she felt a wave of relaxation as the water trickled down her well formed body and all disturbing thoughts left her mind.

* * * * *

"I'm sure you would love to see the stables, Nancy. Do you like horses?" Mathews asked.

Nancy's mind left the fascinating fish pond where her eyes had been devouring the magnificent patterns made by different types of fish. The pond was relatively big. It was covered by a thick glass through which one viewed different varieties of marine life as they swam from one corner to another, producing a most unusual feast of vision.

"Well, I can't say I hate them, sir," Nancy answered and Mathews smiled.

"Drop the formality please. I'm not the type to be addressed thus, Nancy," Mathews said and patted her on the shoulders.

Nancy felt his body move closer to hers and a cold chill ran down her spine. Why does he have to pat me like that? she thought. Why does he have to be so close to me to a point of physical contact? Then her mind raced back to Douglas and with a clear vividness she remembered the dream Mathews had halted by touching her on the cheek in the morning. She again saw Douglas make a dash through the wet sand and hold her by the shoulders when she let out a piercing cry

of pain. She saw him remove her shoe from the injured foot, then the group of curious tourists who started milling round her with muffled consoling voices.

Suddenly, Douglas' words came strongly to her ear; "Take it easy Nancy. It's not a serious injury."

What did that dream mean? Nancy wondered but she could not come up with an answer.

When she looked up to face Mathews, her eyes met those of her father, who together with her mother were being shown around the orange garden by Mrs Mathews a few metres away. For how long has he been watching this scene? Nancy wondered. She pretended that she had not seen him and faced Mathews.

"You don't like being addressed as 'sir'?" she asked, and Mathews smiled.

"At least not by somebody like you," he said.

"Where are the stables?" she asked.

"On the other side of the passion fruit garden," Mathews said. Nancy looked around and saw the garden on the opposite side of the orange garden. The two were separated by a strip of pawpaws.

Mathews led the way as they walked from the fish pond, along one of the many tiled pathways on the compound. They walked to the passion fruits garden and he stopped, turned to face Nancy, and smiled.

"I'm sure you would like to taste one," Mathews commented. Nancy gave him a shy smile, shrugged her shoulders and gazed at the giant fruits which hung from stems supported on several poles.

"No, thank you sir, my stomach is full," Nancy said.

She did not want to portray the image of someone too fond of eating. She had to remember her manners. But he did not hear her answer. He moved close to one of the trees and plucked off two big passion fruits, one of which he handed over to Nancy. Nancy had no choice at this stage.

She took the fruit as Mathews said, "One of these will not make your stomach burst."

Then they moved on along the pathway and came to the stables. There were five horses feeding on yellow maize flour which was

put in troughs at different places. Mathews gave Nancy a lesson on horses. She pretended to enjoy the talk but was in fact bored to death. If anything, she hated horses and she did not want anything to do with them. It was only that she could not tell Mathews. This hatred for horses had developed during her days at Kenya High School when she had seen a man fall to his death from a running horse.

From the stables, Nancy and Mathews joined her parents and Joyce. They then were shown other parts of the farm and at the end Edward and his wife could not help marvelling at the magnificence of Mathews' home. Edward didn't regret ever having become the ADB chairman. Would I be here now if I hadn't become the chairman? he asked himself time and again as he admired the home. Each new scene in the home made the thought tick with more vigour in his mind.

* * * * *

"I'm in love with your daughter," the executive chairman of Romthex International blurted out.

The words reverberated in the four walls of the private room and then hit Edward's mind with a tremendous echo, leaving a wave of thoughts flooding through his confused mind.

Edward was not exactly surprised by the words. What surprised him was the fact that it was a person of such high standing who was saying them. True, he had noticed an odd speck of affection in Mathews' eyes as he gazed fixedly at Nancy during the dinner party at Jennings Hotel but he could not fully tune his mind to believe that Mathews actually had romantic feelings towards his daughter. He could not believe it because it was unusual for a man of his kind to do so, or so he thought. He had all along tried to dispel the thought but now the truth was out. He would no longer need to grapple with the issue of whether to accept the reality in his mind or not. It was now put plainly before him.

Mathews had at least confessed clearly that he was in love with Nancy; whatever that meant.

For Edward, the suspense was now over. He had been kept in suspense for too long by Mathews. They had in fact been out just

twenty minutes but they had seemed to be many hours in his mind. After Mathews and his wife had showed him and his family round the compound, they had all gone back to the house for the ten o'clock tea. It was there that Mathews had whispered into Edward's ear that he wanted a word with him in his private room. Edward had then been engulfed by curiosity and a strong desire to find out what Mathews wanted to tell him.

They had gone out of the dining room, leaving Joyce, Emily and Nancy chatting happily. When they were both seated on the velvet sofas of the private room, Mathews had taken a deep breath and cleared his throat with a slight cough. Then, as Edward's mind raced up and down, contemplating what Mathews was about to tell him, he had heard the words I am in love with your daughter.

Edward just gazed at Mathews for a good fraction of a minute. Then a smile formed on his lips and a thought began to form in his mind. I can capitalise on this golden opportunity and climb the ladder to fame and success, he thought. This is it. My day has come!

Aloud he said in a well calculated phrase, "You are in love with Nancy?"

Mathews smiled broadly and said faintly, "Yes."

Chapter Six

“I must go back to Kenya now,” Nancy said.

It was her third day in Mathews’ home and thoughts of Douglas elicited immense nostalgia in her. She longed to go back to college and feel the warm company of Douglas and to bury herself in the academic world once again.

“I have a present for you Nancy. I’m sure you will like it,” Edward said guardedly.

He studied Nancy’s face closely as he talked.

“What is it again?” Nancy asked curiously.

Her mother watched her gaze and suppressed a smile.

“I want to take you to a better university here in America. You don’t have to go back to Kenya,” Edward said.

Nancy’s face became pale. ‘Did I hear my father well?’ she asked herself. If what she had heard was actually what he had said, then he must be crazy, she thought.

“I’m a student at the University of Nairobi and I’ll remain there till the end of my course,” she retorted. It was the first time she was being curt to her father and when her temper began to cool down, she regretted having said so in such an authoritative manner.

“What do you mean Nancy?” Edward snapped, anger beginning to well up in him because of his daughter’s rudeness.

However, he contained his emotions and resisted the strong urge within him to slap Nancy across the face and tell her that she must do as he said.

“I mean that I wouldn’t like to leave the University of Nairobi, dad,” Nancy answered in a polite tone which was accompanied by an artificial smile to moderate her father’s anger.

Edward was not moved. He continued gazing at her and from his eyes Nancy could discern a volcano of anger simmering within him.

“You wouldn’t like to leave the University of Nairobi,” he said, his words full of polite sarcasm.

“I feel that Nairobi has the best academic and social environment for me,” she said.

Edward watched her silently. This girl is reluctant to leave Nairobi just because of that pauper called Douglas, he thought bitterly. The lad will know who I am. No one should block my way up the ladder of prosperity.

"You'll have some more time to think about it," he said.

"I have had enough time dad and, I'm not going to change my mind," Nancy said confidently.

Edward looked at his wife who sat on a sofa watching the whole scene. He was about to bark a stream of words when there was a knock on the door and Joyce walked in.

"Lunch is served. I'm sure you will love the fried chicken stew," she said, smiling.

"We will be there in a minute, Mrs Mathews," Edward said.

Joyce left the room.

A few minutes later they all walked to the dining room.

* * * * *

"She can't budge from her resolve not to leave Nairobi. She has a funny obsession whose cause I don't exactly know," Edward told Mathews when they were seated in the private room once again.

Mathews sighed.

"She has totally turned down the offer of studying here in America?" he asked.

"Yes, but that shouldn't give us the jitters. I'll make sure that you get her at the earliest time possible," Edward said.

"I hope you won't mind if I put a few questions across to you Professor," Mathews said.

Edward nodded.

"There is no problem Mr Mathews," he said.

"How has Nancy been fairing in the turbulent world of romance?" Mathews asked, studying Edward closely.

"She is an amateur Mr Mathews," Edward said confidently.

Mathews smiled faintly and scratched his beard.

"Does she have a boyfriend?" he asked.

Edward tapped the table faintly with his fingers and faced him.

"She got her first one only a month ago. She isn't experienced and that brings in the possibility that she is wonderful," Edward said.

"What type of boyfriend is that guy?" Mathews asked.

"He is in her class, a student of anthropology at the University of Nairobi," Edward replied.

"I believe you'll do all you can to make her toe the line," Mathews said.

Edward nodded in affirmation.

"I'll do that Mr Mathews," he said. "Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"You are at liberty to ask any question Professor," Mathews said.

"You say you are in love with Nancy, or rather that you love her?" Edward asked.

"Yes," Mathews answered.

"And what are your plans about it?" Edward asked.

"Would you please be specific," Mathews said, studying Edward closely.

"I mean, what will you do with her?" Edward asked.

"I won't exploit her and throw her into the gutters. I'll marry her," Mathews said with a broad smile.

Edward studied him, his face expressing surprise.

"What about your wife?" Edward asked after a short silence.

"Joyce?" Mathews asked.

"Yes, what will happen to her?" Edward asked.

Mathews was silent for a moment and then he said, "It is a sad story Professor."

"What about?" Edward asked.

"About my wife," Mathews said in a low sad tone.

Then he looked up and fixed his eyes on the ceiling. With a clear vividness, his mind went back in time to that year when Joyce came into his life.

Roger Mathews was born in Harlem, a crimeinfested black neighbourhood of NewYork in the early 1940's. He was born of poor

parents, a garage attendant for a father whose insatiable appetite for beer made them even poorer.

Peter Mathews, for that was the name of Roger's father, was a failure in life.

At the age of fifteen Peter was expelled from high school for smashing the nose of a junior student, sending him reeling to a classroom wall and falling unconscious for three hours. It was not the first time for Peter to unleash terror on weaker students for petty reasons. At the moment, the innocent boy had just managed to outwit him in a hot race for a beautiful girl in class. Peter Mathews was not amused and he reasoned that even if he failed to convince the girl that he was a man of substance, he could sure prove his physical superiority in a brawl. And so, he schemed to the junior boy a "lesson" by planning an accident where the boy poured pen ink on his shirt. Before the boy could even apologise, Mathews was punching his nose and savagely tossing him to the wall. The boy's nose bled profusely.

Peter, in mitigation when summoned to the disciplinary committee, said he had assaulted the boy due to immense provocation as the boy had been belittling him for too long. This, however, did not save him. In view of his stained record, the committee could not pass a lenient sentence. He was given just three minutes to clear out of the school for good.

Peter Mathews didn't care. He had learned not to give a damn in life. Everything whether negative or positive was one and the same thing to him. He had long resigned to fate believing it would shape his destiny. One time in future he would die a pauper and a man of no substance. That was what fate had for him but he did not know it then. To him the future held promise, beautiful promises of riches. One day he would be a rich man, a very powerful man.

Having been expelled from school, his interest in education waned. Although his father tried to look for another school for him with the hope that he would one day make it to university and be a renowned figure in the international academic circles, Peter Mathews was not for the idea as he hated school rules and "academic slavery." He did not mince words when telling his father his decision and thus begun his second phase of life.

If there was one thing Mathews liked, it was acting. He was so madly in love with the idea of taking the theatre world by storm that he could think of nothing else. He watched famous Hollywood stars performing in theatres all over the States and saw the command they had over their excited audience. He burned with a strong desire to equally capture the attention of such crowds and be idolized like them. That was his dream and no one could convince him otherwise.

Peter left home and headed for Hollywood, which to him promised greatness and hidden treasure.

He wanted to be a star overnight. He was convinced deep within himself that his potential was too great to be underrated. However, the producers and promoters did not see it. None of them was prepared to spare even a single sentence to describe his "talent" positively. One promoter told him in the face that he was acting no better than a robot after giving him a few lines to go through in his studio. Peter had never felt so bitter in life before. How can this man describe me in such words? he wondered as he stormed out of the studio.

That day Peter never went to see any other promoter. He was too angry to do so. He was burning with rage. He hated all promoters and all those who were blocking his way to stardom. That night, in the small shabby room which he had rented, he meditated and under the blankets, shed tears of frustration. They were cold tears of hate. Hate for everything; hate for the gods for forsaking him; hate for the day he was born; hate for humanity.

The following day he was calmer. He managed with difficulty to suppress his frustrations and was sober enough to muster the guts to see another promoter, Don Corion, who operated in a less posh district of Hollywood. Peter had picked the name from a directory of theatre agents and he hoped that he would at last make a breakthrough. These clowns should recognise my talent, he thought bitterly as he walked toward, Don Corion's office that morning.

"Can I help you, young man?" the secretary asked.

Peter Mathews contained himself although he was actually nervous.

"I'd like to see Mr Don Corion please," he said in his most polite voice.

"What is your name?" the secretary asked in a humourless voice which somewhat made Peter feel unwanted; even despised.

He felt a great rage within him. He hated the secretary in front of him and all her kind. Doesn't she know that I am a star? he wondered "I am Peter Mathews," he said.

"Peter Mathews. What do you want Mr Peter Mathews?" she asked.

Her voice now was sarcastic. Mathews hated her even more and he hated Don Corion. Why exactly would Peter hate somebody he had not even seen didn't matter. 'The bastard has given instructions to the secretary to degrade me,' he thought.

"I'd like to see Mr Don Corion please," Peter said, trying to suppress the anger welling up within him.

"What do you want to tell him?" the secretary asked.

"Personal matters madam," he said faintly.

He was now tired of her. He wanted to tell her that she was a good-for-nothing bitch but knew he should not.

"This is an office Mr Mathews," the secretary told him.

"I know it is an office and that is why I'm here," he retorted.

"Then do you know that personal matters are discussed at home or in bars?" the secretary asked.

Peter felt an urge to smash her nose with his fist as he had done to that stupid boy in high school who dared snatch a girl he wanted. But he could not do all that and he knew it. He just stood gazing at her, more venom simmering in him.

"What do you mean Miss secretary?" Peter asked sharply.

"Don Corion wouldn't like to see such rude street boys like you Mr Mathews. What show do you want to put up by calling me 'Miss secretary'? You have no office manners," she said sarcastically.

"I'm sorry madam. I didn't mean to offend you," Peter said. "Please let me see Mr Don Corion. It means a lot to me. Next time I'll behave better."

The secretary took the telephone and dialled a three digit number. Peter watched in fury as she brought her big lips close to the mouth piece.

"Mr Corion, please ... there is a shabby looking street boy here who wants to see you ... he says it is personal. . . yes." She replaced the receiver back to the cradle and looked up at him. He could have spat in her face and strangled her but there were police stations and prisons in America. So he just stared at her as she replaced the receiver and looked at him.

"Get out of this office, Mr Mathews," she said finally and started going about her work as if he didn't exist.

"What do you mean?" he stammered. The secretary turned to peer at him.

"Don Corion has said that you should get out of this office as quickly as possible. He says two minutes are enough," she answered.

"You're all good for nothing bastards," Peter blurted out and stormed out of the office.

He could feel the eyes of the secretary fixed on him as he walked down the street a frustrated man.

That marked the end of Peter Mathews' fantasies. He consoled himself with the fact that it was the promoters who were frustrating him in his dream but he could have sworn that it didn't mean he was not a good actor. If only I was born a girl, he thought, I could smile my way to stardom.

One day he sat down on his shabby bed and with a clipboard held on his laps wrote a long letter to the editor of the Washington Post in which he unleashed a scathing attack on Hollywood promoters and producers. He described them as good-for-nothing bastards, imbeciles and added other obscene adjectives.

Peter was lucky for his letter was not thrown into the editor's trash basket. It was published, albeit in a mild form. The obscene adjectives did not appear in the published version. He was angry at the editor for he was convinced those adjectives described exactly what they were.

Ten bitter years later, Roger Mathews was born. In his childhood, his mother Imelda Mathews told him many stories of the past which looked like a tragic show on the screen. Roger Mathews was told how his father had died of a murderer's bullet when he Roger, was merely 15 days old. He was told how his father had met his mother in Hollywood, and how they had married after their dreams of making it

big in Hollywood proved a lost dream. The couple had been afflicted by great poverty and they eventually moved to Harlem. Roger was moved by the sad narration and he cried many times whenever his mother repeated the tale in her joyless tone.

When time came for Mathews to start school he went to a predominantly black school in the neighbourhood. His mother was employed as a receptionist in a hotel owned by a wealthy black American and she got enough money to bring him up.

Mathews became part and parcel of the black community. At first he was affected psychologically by the children who kept bullying him. They seemed to enjoy teasing him. The reality of racism in the American society had not yet infiltrated his tender mind, but with time, he came to understand the issue in its real perspective. He could now understand why the black children always appeared hostile to him. He could now explain why they kept calling him a white bastard. When he finally understood it, he sought to be more assimilated into the community. He knew that this was the only way through which he could avoid victimisation.

Mathews strove to behave like the black children and to think like them. When they threw stones at a white motorist driving by the school, he joined them and also shouted abuses.

"You damn white bastard."

That was their favourite abuse.

Before long Mathews was accepted in the black community. Soon he learnt their ways and understood their feelings and their thoughts. He came to sympathise with them for the humiliation they were subjected to by the more politically influential white Americans. His mother shared his sentiments and she encouraged him to develop a positive attitude towards humanity and to avoid falling victim of the white superiority complex.

"Treat them like human beings and forget that they are black," his mother always told him.

She did not forget to mention that a black man was her employer.

Mathews was bright in school. He was always among the top students and somehow, he did not brag to his classmates. The proof

that he was wholly assimilated into the black community was in his election as class prefect in Fourth Grade. Mathews showed unique leadership qualities and was respected by even his teachers. As time went by he became more popular in school.

* * * * *

When in Grade Five, Roger Mathews started observing his mother's private life with a keener interest and a curiosity that was lacking in his younger years. They lived in a two-bedroomed house which had a small sitting room, part of which was used as the kitchen. The whole set-up meant that the bedrooms were next to each other.

Mathews would hear his mother wake up at night, light a lantern and go through the sitting room to the main door. Out of curiosity he would cock his ears and listen carefully. He could always hear the sound of the door hinges as the door opened slightly and he could make a mental calculation that there was an attempt to minimise the sound.

He would hear the door close slowly and the sound of footsteps heading stealthily back to the bedroom. He would hear muffled voices and wonder whom his mother was talking to. After three weeks he could not stifle his curiosity any more. One day he got up slowly and moved out of the bedroom, making as little noise as possible. He went to the bathroom without lighting the lantern. He could easily make his way in the darkness as he was used to the arrangement of the house.

He sat still in the bathroom, his ears cocked and eyes fixed at the seemingly dark emptiness of the table room which he viewed from the slightly opened door of the bathroom. Minutes ticked by. Then he heard a slight tapping at his mother's bedroom window. There was a second tapping and then a long silent spell.

Mathews heard his mother's bedroom door open, the hinges making a slight noise as usual. Then, with a lantern held in her hand, she walked quietly through the sitting room to the main door. Mathews opened the bathroom door some more. He watched keenly, his heart beating wildly. Then he saw a man walk into the room and his mother closed the door. Mathews gazed at the scene in amazement.

Ted Dinkins wore a black three piece suit and in his hand held a bunch of keys. Mathews knew they were his car keys and that meant the car was a few blocks away in the estate's parking lot.

Ted was a well known personality in Harlem. He was one of the few men of substance among America's black population there. Over the years, he had managed to amass a lot of wealth with which he engaged in real estate business, not only in Harlem but also in Brooklyn and other black towns. He had come to command a lot of respect from the black people as more and more white Americans hated him for his radical pro-black politics. Still, he remained one of the wealthiest black men.

Among his business interests was the magnificent Shaka Hotel in Harlem. It was named after the great African Zulu king who was adored by the black Americans. It was at this hotel that Mathews' mother was employed.

A feeling of excitement raced up Mathews' spine as he watched Ted embrace his mother and kiss her passionately.

He heard him whispers, I love you Imelda, and the two walked away from the door through the sitting room and into his mother's bedroom. His mother opened the door slowly and walked in followed closely behind by Ted. There then was the sound of a key turning as the door was locked.

Mathews sighed heavily. He waited for a few minutes and then got out of the bathroom slowly. He walked quietly on tip toe to his bedroom door. As he began to push it open faintly, he heard the familiar noise of his mother's bed springs and he could imagine what was taking place. When he got in he closed the door behind him slowly, locked it and got back to bed.

One month later everyone in Harlem knew that Ted Dinkins was in love with a white woman, Imelda Mathews.

Ted began to visit Mathews' mother openly. His mother even introduced Ted to him and Mathews benefited from this turn of events. He could now get more pocket money from his mother and even Ted gave him a few dollars occasionally. Mathews liked him.

One day Mathews was listening to the lunchtime news bulletin on the radio. He nearly fell down in shock when he heard that Ted Dinkins had been shot dead by a white man when leaving his home for the office. Mathews felt cold tears stream down his cheeks. He liked Ted very much and he could not believe that he was dead now. It must be a terrible joke, he thought. But it proved to be no joke. Ted was dead. Killed by a white man.

News of Ted's death spread in the school like a bush fire. Students began to riot as they chanted black patriotic slogans. They raced up and down the streets, beating up every white person they came across and burning property worth millions. The entire Harlem became a mass of violence as all the blacks joined in the protest.

Mathews ran home quickly. He knew that his mother must have heard the news bulletin and must be depressed. That day she was off duty and Mathews figured that he should try and console her.

When he reached home, Mathews found that the door was closed but not locked. He pushed it open and got in. The radio set was on the table, playing music, but he could not see his mother in the room. He proceeded to her bedroom, pushed the door open and walked in. What he saw made him stop in his tracks. He could not yell, cry or say anything. It was the most horrifying sight he had ever seen.

His mother lay prostrate on the floor face down in a pool of blood. A big mass of blood had clotted around her back where an Arab-knife's handle could be seen protruding. The whole blade had gone through and obviously sliced her heart. Mathews shed tears. They were uncontrollable tears of sorrow and hate. He hated whoever had killed his mother and he cursed him to a similar fate. Soon, Mathews tears turned into a wail.

After gazing at the scene in paralysis for a while, he saw the small piece of paper which had been placed near his mother's head. There on it was one sentence, written in blood: WHITE BLOOD SHOULD NOT BE DILUTED. He now knew exactly what had happened. He remembered Ted kissing his mother from his hideout in the bathroom. A strong hatred for whites filled him to a point of choking.

Minutes later, Mathews gathered courage and walked down the street to report the incident to the police station.

A black man took care of Mathews after his mother's death. Brian Jackson did not harbour any antiwhite sentiments. He was a church pastor who advocated for mutual co-existence of all. He sympathized with Mathews and asked him to stay with him so that he could finish school and thereafter be able to fend for himself.

Jackson had two sons and a daughter. Mathews grew up with these children and he liked their company. Before long he was fully assimilated into the Jackson family and he identified himself fully with them. He liked Jackson for he was a very understanding man.

Mathews was an excellent scholar. He passed very well and went to high school. His hatred for racism increased and it was at this time that he developed a distinct philosophy in life. He conjured up a picture of the ideal life he would like to live. He always reflected on his past and loathed his suffering.

One day, while reading in the school library, he clenched his fist and blurted out, "I must become a millionaire."

Many faces turned to look at him and loud peals of laughter followed. Mathews felt embarrassed. He had unconsciously talked aloud, forgetting that he was not alone.

Mathews performed very well in high school and was awarded a scholarship to Harvard. Jackson and others close to him advised him to take engineering but he politely turned down the advice, preferring political science instead. And he excelled in it.

It was at Harvard that Mathews met Joyce. Mathews was a morally upright student. He eschewed the social excesses which students engaged in and he employed all his energy to striving for success. The dream of one day becoming a millionaire was becoming more and more alluring.

It was turning into an obsession which was so strong that he felt uneasy at the thought of not realising it. He set to work with single minded devotion and even disassociated himself from girls who had lost direction. As he perceived it, associating himself with a loose girl was tantamount to dealing a lethal blow on his dream.

When Mathews deviated from this self proclaimed abstention it was against his will. It was the result of a well schemed mischievous ploy which he had little suspicion of.

Joyce Houston was a young girl of exquisite beauty. She was one of the most admired girls on the entire campus. Like all girls who were excited by the many boys who desperately made advances at them, Joyce lost direction and became easy going. Soon, engaging in sexual activities became her favourite hobby. It was this that made Mathews hate her. He even regretted that they were in the same class studying political science. He would have liked to be far from her and all who were like her.

When Joyce joined Harvard, she had been a docile girl. She did not know much about life and she dreaded the idea of falling in love. That she would ever engage in sex before marriage was an idea non existent in her imagination. She wanted to maintain her purity and preserve her dignity as a woman. She wanted to live an ideal, chaste life as taught by her parents who were staunch Christians.

However, the good life of Harvard rent a vicious blow to her ideals. No matter how much she tried she could not resist throwing herself into the life of pleasure that Harvard offered. Her ignorance was her major undoing. She was naive and inexperienced. When the experience came, it was with a suddenness that surprised those who had known her before. She was transformed into a new Joyce almost overnight.

During her first two weeks in Harvard, seven men had declared their interest in her and there were many more eyeing her and they were only prevented from making their intentions known by natural shyness. Joyce was at a loss. She did not know how to react to the new situation. One day she cried when one of the students came to her room in the middle of the night and said that he loved her.

Joyce had not thought that any man could come to her room at such an odd hour. She had thought that whoever was knocking at the door was just a girlfriend and had not bothered to put on her clothes as she left the bed. She walked to the door and opened it, clad only in a peticoat. When the man stormed in she almost fainted with shock and embarrassment. She would have slammed the door on his face but he was too quick for her. He embraced and kissed her on the lips.

The man introduced himself as Raymond Jones. Later, Joyce learnt that he was a student of religious studies. He told her that he had first met her during the new students' orientation week and fallen in love with her at first sight!

Much as Joyce attempted to keep him off he overpowered her emotions. She had never been kissed before. This first kiss sent waves of romantic passion down her body and she began to wonder why she had been denying herself such pleasures. Twenty minutes later, after the tears on her cheeks had dried she closed the door and Raymond broke her virginity.

Sex with Raymond became a daily routine. Joyce could not establish what was pulling her towards him for she could not have claimed that she loved him. She did not. She had read many love stories in novels and seen many romantic films but she was sure she did not have any intimate feelings for him. A breakthrough to her ambivalence came when she fell in love with another boy; a second year philosophy student.

She was the first to make an advance. It was the first time that she felt real love for someone. Unlike before, she could now enjoy sex with her new boyfriend. It ceased to be the daily ritual it had been with Raymond.

After barely a month, however, they broke up. The boy arrogantly discarded Joyce for a younger girl who had just joined Harvard. To add insult to injury, he told Joyce that he found it unfit to continue having a harlot of her kind for a girlfriend. Joyce cried in frustration. She even contemplated committing suicide but a friend advised her against it. She was now a leafless plant; a mere stem with no life. The man she loved and held dear had turned her down. All the trust she had given him was now just a memory and it filled her soul with venom.

A month later Joyce realised that she was pregnant. It was the most frustrating period of her life. She was at a loss on what to do. Perhaps she could have recovered from the shock of being deserted by her loved one but the problem was multiplied a thousand fold.

Joyce hated the pregnancy and hated herself. Deep feelings of vengeance built up inside her. She knew exactly what she was going

to do – the baby had to go. She was not one to follow moral values anymore. They no longer mattered to her.

Joyce had heard of abortions frequently. She knew it was a ghastly experience but she also knew that it was the only solution in a situation like hers. She had to abort the pregnancy at all costs.

She managed to procure the abortion safely and life went back to normal. She forgot her experience almost immediately and resumed her promiscuous behaviour. Throwing herself into carefree sex yet again, Joyce visited uncountable rooms in the men's hostels in the university and this culminated in yet another pregnancy.

Like before, she aborted the pregnancy but this time all was not well. She had gone to an inexperienced doctor and a complication resulted. She was bedridden for a month and at the end of it all her medical report stated that she would never be able to give birth. Her uterus had been destroyed.

Mathews had observed all this and he hated Joyce from the depth of his heart. What he did not know was that Joyce could no longer bear children. Had he known that he could have hated her even more. Mathews also did not know he would one day fall head over heels in love with Joyce despite his hatred for her.

When the doctor declared that she could never conceive again, Joyce sunk into a deep pit of agony. Surprisingly, she still had dreams of raising a family in future. Her subconscious mind still had specks of ambition whose manifestation in daily life was only buffered by her inability to control her emotions.

Bitter reality had dawned on her but it had dawned too late. She realised that she had destroyed her life, her future, her dreams and her womanhood.

Joyce knew she had to do something to secure a good future. She was despised by all her college mates but she did not really care. She had to use her brains to find a way to a prosperous future. She would do anything to become someone of substance, even if she was ridiculed and despised.

Joyce had known Roger Mathews from her first days in Harvard. She knew that he was a unique character in class and that he had a

strong will to succeed. He had ambitions for the future. Indeed, beneath the veneer of docile accomplishments, Joyce could see a potentially prosperous man; a man who would command immense influence in the American society. It would take time she knew, but was certain that it would happen. It was this man that Joyce singled out as her ladder to success.

Joyce knew Mathews' weaknesses. She knew that he was inexperienced in romance. She also knew that on this, she was unrivalled and she intended to use her experience to her advantage. She would soak him with love until he was intoxicated. Then she would influence him to marry her. And as he fanned his strong ambition, Joyce would benefit.

Joyce began to implement her plan by talking to Mathews often. She could see that he was not interested in any sort of friendship with her, however casual, but she did not despair. She knew what was making him react that way and so she persisted.

Along with this Joyce transformed her social character suddenly. She discarded her care free attitude and put on a cosmetic one. She no longer jumped from bed to bed in the men's hostels. She forced herself to do without a boyfriend. Many people laughed at her for they knew she was a useless lady only seeking solace after being ruined. They avoided her.

Six months later Joyce managed to soften Mathews' heart towards her. She could tell that his loathing for her was decreasing slowly. Her plan was registering the first signs of success and she was glad.

One day to the graduation ceremony, Joyce went to Mathews' room at ten o'clock in the night. Mathews could not hide his surprise. He had not expected to see her.

The surprise was however turned to shock and then confusion. He could not believe that Joyce was standing before him. First he devoured her physical qualities, his mind rocked in a battle on whether or not to credit her where it was due. Her negative history had taught him to view her through a lens of subjectivity.

Joyce wore a tight T-shirt through which Mathews could see the outline of her body. He could not help admiring her sharp breasts. Her

brown skirt could not exactly be termed as a mini skirt but was close to one. Just slightly longer and tighter. She wore a black wig to cover her short hair which Mathews was used to seeing. It was as if she knew Mathews' interests. He hated short hair.

"Hi Mathews," she said in a soft lovely voice.

"I'm fine. Can I help you?" Mathews asked.

Joyce smiled, ignored his indifference, and walked towards him. She stood close to him and was silent for a moment, letting his eyes devour her beautiful face and the protruding nipples.

"I've something to tell you Mathews," she said finally.

"What the hell is it about?" Mathews asked uneasily, as if he was impatient to see her out of the room.

Joyce smiled broadly, held his hand and his heart skipped a beat. He had a mind to shove her out but on second thought he decided against it.

"I love you Mathews," Joyce said in a soft romantic voice.

Mathews gazed at her in amazement. Joyce embraced and kissed him gently on the lips. Mathews felt a stirring in his loins and Joyce kissed him more passionately. She held him against her as she ran her hand down his body caressing him gently and then stopped at his trousers zip. She could feel the big lump as his member fought its way out, threatening to burst as its elasticity reached maximum. Joyce rubbed her hand against the erection and felt it give heavy jerks. She knew that she had now conquered him.

Kissing him further to build more hunger, she let her grip on him loose gently. She watched Mathews gaze at her in paralysis, a deep mist in his eyes. Slowly, she walked to the door and locked it, leaving the key in the keyhole. Then she went back gracefully and embraced him once again. She repeated the kissing and caressing until she felt his body shiver with passion.

Joyce removed her T-shirt and threw it on the reading table. Mathews watched her breasts standing out invitingly as Joyce pushed one of them towards his face and rubbed the nipple against his cheeks. She then rubbed both breasts against his lips and made his hands feel their gentle touch. She unbuttoned Mathews' shirt slowly, removed and

threw it onto the reading table. Quickly she removed her skirt and threw it onto the table also. Mathews watched in a mute paralysis, feasting his eyes on her as she lay nude, clad only in white panties. She then unzipped his trousers and pulled them down. Mathews felt himself in a reflex action raising his legs, and kicking off his sandals to let the trousers find their way off his body. Joyce then got hold of his pants and pulled them gently down his legs. As she threw them onto the table she could feel his wetness on her fingers. She then removed her panties slowly and tossed them onto the heap of clothes on the table.

Joyce looked straight at Mathews' eyes and then at his stiff penis which shot towards her menacingly. She embraced him, caressed him with the left hand while her right held his penis tightly.

She massaged it lovingly for a few seconds and then looked at Mathews invitingly and said, "Have me Mathews. I love you."

The words came in an outpouring of emotions as she held his penis and rubbed its tip against her thighs.

By the time she led Mathews to bed, he was panting and sweating profusely. When he began to make love to her, it was at a vigorous pace, panting and caressing her breasts. The whole night he enjoyed what he had been missing in his life, and he regretted not having enjoyed it much earlier.

Mathews became a changed man. A deep black curtain now veiled the reality from his eyes and Joyce ceased to be the harlot she used to be to him. She was now a charming lovely woman who loved him from the bottom of her heart. He now felt the warmth of being loved.

Joyce was a good schemer. She had calculated that as Mathews was soon leaving Harvard, he would have no one to influence his feelings towards her. She would then continue to hold him captive with her feminine charms and in this way would realise the plans succeed.

Three days after graduation, Mathews was employed at the civil rights movement in Harlem, just as was Joyce. One day later, they were engaged. Mathews' mentor, Brian Jackson, was opposed to that kind of a hasty decision but Mathews was too madly in love with Joyce to heed any advice.

Two months later, Mathews told Jackson that he wanted to marry Joyce. They had been cohabitating all this while. The marriage plans were finalised in three weeks. There followed a ceremony in a Catholic church in Harlem and Roger Mathews and Joyce Houston were declared husband and wife.

* * * * *

Mathews relaxed his gaze and faced Edward.

He shook his head and with a loud curse said, "I married a barren harlot!"

"What do you mean?" Edward asked in surprise.

"The very words I've said," Mathews said faintly.

"I thought you had grown up children," Edward said.

Mathews looked at him with an expressionless face.

"They aren't my children," he said. "I adopted them when I realised the mistake I had made. I wish I took the advice of Brian Jackson. I wouldn't be in this mess now. Joyce wouldn't be my wife."

"Who is Brian Jackson?" Edward asked.

Mathews was in serious thought as if in a meditation.

"He was my mentor. A black man I'll always hold dear," he said. "He told me not to be too hasty in getting engaged to Joyce but I didn't listen. I knew Joyce was morally rotten during our days in Harvard. She had performed many abortions but I didn't know that her uterus had been damaged during her last abortion and that she couldn't conceive again. I only came to know the truth two years after I married her."

"I'm sorry Mr Mathews. It must be a sad experience," Edward said in consolation.

"I want to forget her. I want to replace her with Nancy," Mathews said decidedly.

Chapter Seven

Douglas Kamau shifted uneasily in the seat and with slightly shaking hands tore the envelope open. His heart was beating with anxiety. The letter meant a lot to him and he knew it. If what was written was positive, then the gate to the fulfilment of his dream would be opened. The world would know he existed. It would know that a great writer had been born.

"Thank you for entering your essay 'When the Gods shall speak'. Douglas read. God, have I won? he wondered as curiosity overcame him.

He read on. "It was a classic piece of literature ... a masterpiece in its own right. . ."

I might have won after all, he thought as more excitement engulfed him.

"Please, make arrangements to receive your award during the prize giving ceremony to be held in our offices next Thursday. You were number one in the country ..."

That was enough. He had read it now and he had the information. The message was simple. His essay had won! The world would now have to recognise him. He was now a man worth noticing.

Douglas put the neatly typed letter back into the envelope and threw it into his desk drawer. Radiating with confidence, he got up from the seat and paced to the door. Then a thought struck him, Nancy! She was coming back from America that very day and he had to meet her at the airport. She had rung him the night before and told him the time her plane would be touching down at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. He stole a quick glance at his watch. It was two hours to her arrival time.

Douglas left the room, locked it, walked down the stairs. He went to the dining room and half an hour later took a taxi to the airport.

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Douglas was quick to discern that the Waihenyas visit to America had brought a change. He noticed it immediately they walked out of customs. When he walked towards them to welcome them his fear that something bad lurked in their midst was confirmed.

Nancy was not her usual self. Douglas knew her as a girl who was very fond of her parents and who liked engaging in lively discussions with them. This was not the case now. She looked withdrawn and showed no interest in them. If Douglas was not wrong, he could tell that there was an element of anger in her towards the parents. He could tell that she did not even want to look at them straight in the eye.

Edward too showed a marked difference from the man Douglas had known. He did not show enthusiasm in talking to either his daughter or his wife. Besides, Douglas noticed that Edward was cold towards him. As they shook hands, Douglas saw in his eyes a flicker of anger. He could have sworn it was hate for him. Edward did not say anything to him beyond the greetings.

Nancy's mother too seemed different though hers was not as conspicuous. She tried her best to be friendly. In a nutshell, the atmosphere was tense. Douglas wondered what had gone wrong in America.

Though Nancy tried her best to conceal her attitude towards her parents, she could not fool Douglas. She put up her usual charming smile and chatted jovially but Douglas could see beyond her pretence. He could see that beneath the veneer of happiness simmered a deadly volcano of anger. Douglas had known Nancy too well and he now knew that behind the anger was still her usual love for him. She looked at him straight in the face and his eyes were glued squarely on hers. In her eyes he saw the suppressed beams of silent love. And he saw the restlessness in her. Douglas sympathised. He knew that one or both of her parents had hurt her. Something must have happened in America.

Douglas' observation was vindicated when Nancy said she would not go home with them but would instead go straight to the university from the airport. Her mother tried to impress on her the need for relaxation at home before going back to college but Nancy would not change her mind.

Edward fished out a bundle of money and gave it to Nancy.

"Hire a taxi with this," he said.

"Have a good time in campus you two," Emily said.

"Have a good time too," Douglas said.

Nancy then led Douglas to the taxi stand a few metres away, leaving her parents still standing at the waiting lounge as they waited for the ADB car which would take them home.

"Please tell me darling, what went wrong in America?" Douglas asked.

Nancy just sat at the back as the taxi began to pull out of the parking lot. She looked straight into Douglas' face with a broad smile and Douglas could tell she was now relaxed.

"How did you know that something had gone wrong dear?" Nancy asked.

Douglas' eyes remained glued to her face.

"I can see it in your eyes. Something seems to have happened. You look disturbed," he said.

"My parents have betrayed me. They dehumanised me. They have used me," Nancy said.

From her voice, Douglas could pick out the unmistakable note of anger and sorrow. He could tell that she was not just talking. She was speaking from deep within her. The words were from her inner self, the bitter words of a troubled soul. And they pierced Douglas sharply like a blade. He felt her agony and shared her torment. For the first time he felt aggrieved. Whoever had hurt Nancy had hurt him. Nancy was part of him. Her happiness was his and her sorrow was his sorrow too.

"What exactly have they done to you?" he asked curiously.

"It is a long story Douglas. I'll tell you when we reach college," Nancy said.

It was then that Douglas realised that the driver was paying attention to their conversation. That was why Nancy had decided to wait until they reached campus before telling him. He knew Nancy well enough to know that she could not be angered by something petty. Whatever it was that her parents had done must be very serious. As the taxi neared the university, Douglas burned with impatience.

Nancy directed the taxi driver to drive to Hall Nine. She did not want to go to her room at the women's hall. Her friends already knew she was arriving that day from America as the newspapers had written about it. She knew that they would be excited to see her and that they would expect too much from her in terms of stories of the visit. This was what she wanted to avoid. She did not want to face the embarrassment of being seen in low spirits while they all would be expecting a joyful reunion. Hence she opted to go to Douglas' room first and hopefully cool down.

As the two got out of the taxi, a group of students who were basking outside the hall began to whistle softly at first and then loudly. Douglas wanted to ignore them but he could not. Though he tried to avoid it, he found himself turning towards them as he walked with Nancy, her bag in his hand.

Douglas saw a number of his friends in the group. He identified several of them as his classmates and others from other faculties. He faced them, his eyes probing the whole group and they began to wave at him. He waved back without stopping or slowing down. Nancy did not even turn to look at the group. As she and Douglas began to climb the flight of stairs, she could make out loud shouts from the mob. "The millionaire's daughter can't even look at us."

"The girl is cute but arrogant."

"They're just an infatuated duo."

"She is the daughter of a man who has been robbing the poor."

"Is it true that the guy's parents are paupers?"

Douglas almost put his fingers to his ears. He did not want to hear the words and hoped that Nancy had not heard them, but he was wrong. Nancy had heard every word and she burned with rage for the students. Silently, she wished that she had not been born in a rich family.

"The problem with university students is that they think all rich people are exploiters of the poor," Nancy said with frustration written on her face.

"Take it easy Nancy, they're just an excitable lot," Douglas said. The two finally came to Douglas' room. He dug into his coat pocket and produced the key to the room. He opened the door then pushed it open and they walked.

As he put the bag down on the brick floor, a thought struck him. The competition! He had not told Nancy about his victory. Nancy would be proud of him. He turned to look at her, his face beaming with a broad smile and radiating a warmth which Nancy knew was not caused by just something minor. He must have something important to say, she thought.

"I've great news Nancy," Douglas said.

She looked at him expectantly.

"Tell me," she said.

"I had forgotten all along to tell you of my victory," Douglas said.

"Come on, stop keeping me guessing. I'm burning to hear the story," Nancy said, patting him on the shoulders.

"Did I tell you about the writing competition in which I entered my story entitled 'When The Gods Shall Speak'?" Douglas asked.

"The one that was organised by the *Nation* newspaper a month ago?" Nancy asked, beaming with enthusiasm.

"Yes, I feel like jumping up to the sky," Douglas said.

"Have you won?" she asked excitedly.

"I beat everyone else in the whole country," he replied.

"Hey, darling I'm proud of you," Nancy said.

She held him tightly and kissed him passionately. "I've never doubted your talent in writing. You'll be a great writer."

They embraced for a few more minutes after which Douglas relaxed his grip on her and opened his desk drawer.

"This is the letter that I received today before I left for the airport." He handed it to Nancy. She took it and read it. As she read Douglas could see her eyes radiating with joy. He could see a true sense of appreciation on her face. He was overjoyed. Here was somebody who could truly appreciate his talent.

"Congratulations my dear. It's a real achievement to have written the best story in the country," Nancy said.

"Thank you very much," Douglas said happily.

"What was the theme of the story?" she asked.

"It was corruption, betrayal, exploitation and deception. The story hit out at the injustices of the world and warned of the danger of creating

a man-eat-man society as is the case currently," Douglas replied.

"It has a good title," Nancy observed.

"That summarises my vision for the world. I foresee a time when the gods will speak to men; a time of judgement. The gods will speak impartially and they will condemn all injustices and hit out at the vices among men. Let me read you the first paragraph of the story," Douglas said.

"Do you have a copy with you?" Nancy asked.

"Yes," he answered and pulled open the desk drawer. He fumbled with some papers and removed a script of five fullscaps held together using a pin. Nancy listened as he read the first chapter of his winning story. It was so full of emotion and literary strength.

"When the gods shall speak, beggars will get the rare opportunity to smile, for they will no longer live on the sideline of humanity as lesser beings. Desperate job seekers will cease to hear the evil language of corruption. They will be forced to bribe their way to jobs no longer. The ruled will cease to be baton-charged in city streets. Calling for a better life will no longer be a crime for their once closed lips will open to tell tales; tales of a desired destiny of aspirations and of hope. And there will be none to suppress what is right for humanity. people gods will then care."

"It is a wonderful piece, Douglas. You really know how to capture the reader's emotions using your style," Nancy commented.

"I'm flattered Nancy," he said.

"Keep it up dear. Keep those ambers of creativity burning to achieve your dream. You aren't different from the best writers of our times. By the way, do you read Richard Wright's books?" she asked.

Douglas smiled.

"Richard was a great writer. He is one of the writers I admire a lot. I also admire Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Peter Abrahams. Their works reflect a serious commitment to bringing about a new world order," Douglas said.

"That paragraph sounds like it has been written by Richard Wright. It reminds me of Wright's 'Native Son'. I couldn't help sympathising

with the hero of the book, Bigger Thomas. Wright grips the reader's emotions so much that one feels part of the story," Nancy said.

"I might have been influenced by Richard Wright subconsciously. I've read all his books," Douglas said.

"It will be wonderful to receive a typewriter and a cash prize of two thousand shillings from the newspaper's chief editor on Thursday, Douglas. I look forward to the big occasion," Nancy said.

"The world will know that Douglas Kamau exists; that he is a great writer in the making and that he also has a claim in the national literary scene. You'll be by my side as I receive the prize. Nancy I'm sure there will be many reporters from all the newspapers and television channels. How wish my mother had a television set. She would see me receiving the top prize. Nothing could be better than a poor mother seeing her poor son beating all the sons of millionaires in a writing competition. It will remind her that God cares for the poor and that He has not forsaken us even if we don't live in mansions and drive sleek cars. It will remind her that a person can become great even if he or she was born in a junk of a car by the roadside at night. It will show her, Nancy that one day she will stop walking the long miles to eke out a living in people's farms under the scorching sun. That one day her son will become a great writer," Douglas said.

Douglas was not looking at Nancy and then he faced her. His eyes were not in this world as they gazed fixedly at the opposite wall without seeing it. They were in a distant world. Douglas' world. As he talked he did not plan what to say next. He was not in control of what he was saying. The words were just pouring out of his soul. It was his subconscious mind that was speaking his dreams; dreams that lay locked within him without finding a vent except now. The words came laden with the sadness in which they were locked. They carried a strong emotional current that could not help drawing sympathy from her. They were words of great hope, borne out of deep frustrations and they echoed in Nancy's ears for a long time after they were spoken.

"You make me sad Douglas," she said.

Douglas' mind came to the present and he looked at Nancy straight in the eyes as if he had just seen her.

"Why Nancy?" he asked.

"The words you have just spoken have pierced my heart," she said.

"What have I said?" Douglas asked curiously.

"I knew you were not aware that you were saying them. I could see that your mind was very far away, Douglas. You have uttered words of desperation. Words which show you perceive yourself as being inferior to the rich. I have always told you to discard that perception. Do not let despair be embedded in your mind. Celebrate life like all men. You are a child of the universe and you have a right to be here," she said emotionally.

"Well, I'm sorry Nancy. I'll try to change my view of the world and my general perception of life," Douglas said. "Oh, and that reminds me. You haven't yet told me what happened in America. We were so excited about my victory that we forgot all about your problem. You said your parents betrayed you."

"They did," Nancy said. "They have done something I couldn't have imagined they could ever do. They have degraded my humanity."

"What exactly did they do?" Douglas asked as he burned with impatience.

"After my father met with the chairman of Romthex, a dinner in his honour was held at a hotel in Washington. My mother and I attended the party," Nancy said.

"Then what happened?" Douglas asked.

"Relax," she said. "At the party, Mathews kept on staring at me and I wondered what was wrong."

"The executive chairman of the giant Romthex International was admiring you at the party, you mean?" Douglas asked in disbelief. Nancy smiled.

"Seemingly yes," Nancy said. "He kept on staring at me until everyone at the party began to stare at him and then at me. I was embarrassed and I felt guilty for having gone to the party. When the party ended, Mathews summoned my father to office and invited him, my mother and I to spend a few days at his home in Atlanta."

"Then what happened?" Douglas asked, puzzled.

"Can you imagine the man came to pat me on the cheeks to wake me up in the morning?" Nancy asked.

"Who did that?" Douglas asked, more worried than shocked.

"Roger Mathews," she said. "I was scared stiff. Even my own father has never come into my bedroom to wake me up, leave alone patting me on the cheeks."

"So what did you do?" Douglas asked.

"Nothing. I couldn't have done anything," Nancy said. "When he left the room I just left the bed and took a shower before going for breakfast. Later, Mathews and his wife took us around the home. Mathews tried deliberately to ensure that he was very close to me. There was a time he patted me on the back when he was showing me the fish in his pond. I looked in the direction my parents were and saw them staring at us. I was very embarrassed. The same day Mathews and my father met for a few minutes in his private room. I don't know what they discussed but I know that a few hours later my father told me he wanted me to move from the University of Nairobi to a university in America! I rejected the offer outright, even before he gave me his reason for the change. He was angry with me. My mother was angry too. But I didn't care, Douglas. I've never felt so much hatred for my parents. I couldn't believe that they wanted me to yield to the American tycoon but that was the truth. It was the bitter truth and I didn't want to believe it. They were treating me like a whore. I wanted the earth to swallow me. That was a bitter betrayal and an abuse of my dignity."

There were many questions Douglas would have liked to ask but he did not know which one to start with. They were so many that they formed a complex web of confusion in his mind. He did not understand wholly what Nancy was saying although the message was finally clear. His mind refused to accept the reality. A year later Douglas would treat the world to this reality which Nancy had just told him in his best-selling novel. It would take the world by storm. He would condense Nancy's words in a paragraph:

"Nancy told me that she couldn't imagine Roger Mathews patting her cheeks to wake her up in her bedroom. Later when Mathews and his wife Joyce were showing her family around

the compound, Nancy noticed that Mathews deliberately tried to be very close to her. She recounted to me how he patted her on the back when he was showing her the fish in the pond. Nancy was embarrassed. Later her father met the tycoon in his private room for a few minutes and she told me that she did not know what they discussed. However a few hours later they proposed that she move from the University of Nairobi to a university in America. In characteristic style, Nancy rejected the offer on the spot and her parents were angry at her. Nancy developed a deep hatred for them. She could not believe the bitter reality; that they wanted to give her up to the American tycoon. In an emotional tone that simmered with anger, Nancy told me that her parents were treating her like a harlot . . .

"I'm sorry for the predicament Nancy," Douglas said. "Take it easy and stop worrying."

"How did you know that something had gone wrong in America, Douglas?" Nancy asked.

"I told you that it was written all over your face. It could also be seen on your parents' faces. I knew there must have been something sinister. I also noticed that your father no longer had any interest in me, but don't worry. Everything will be okay," Douglas said.

"I wonder what will happen now. I had never imagined my parents and I would one day become foes. It is a really disturbing thought, Douglas," Nancy said.

"Take it easy Nancy. Let's hope for the best. Things may change and return to normal. With God everything is possible."

He really meant every word he said.

Douglas was not a born-again Christian and neither was he intoxicated with religious dogma of eventual reward. His was a strong faith blended with logic. He believed in rationality and in God. He knew that God gave man the power to make rational decisions and that it was this rationality that guided man's conscience and by extension, his actions and the subsequent events in life. What man could not rationalise, God would take care of. This was the faith which he was now fortifying himself with. He could not predict the course of action

Nancy's father and Mathews would take. The issue was rather too complex for his already overwhelmed mind, but he had hope.

"I was burning with anger all the way from Atlanta but news of your victory has excited me, Douglas. I will love you forever dear. I don't care what happens," Nancy said in a reassuring voice.

* * * * *

On Thursday morning, Douglas and Nancy left the campus and walked to the offices of *Nation* newspapers. Douglas wore a black suit and a brown tie. These he had bought the previous month with his university allowance. Nancy wore a blue silk dress which had shiny stripes running along its length. Her hair was curled and although she had not applied lipstick, she looked very beautiful.

The atmosphere at Nation House was one of excitement. Douglas and Nancy walked confidently through the entrance into the reception. He introduced himself as one of the people who were supposed to receive prizes that day.

"What is your name, please?" the cheerful receptionist asked. Douglas told her his names.

"You are Douglas Kamau?" the receptionist asked excitedly.

She knew that Douglas Kamau had been adjudged the best writer in the competition but she had not imagined he would turn out to be so young. "Congratulations, Douglas. You did a good job."

Douglas thanked her for the compliment.

At that moment, a man who had been standing a few metres away conversing with another man turned when the receptionist mentioned Douglas' name. He came closer and gently patted Douglas on the shoulder. When Douglas turned, he recognised immediately who the man was. He was Mr Nathaniel Budu, a renowned figure for his flare in writing. Nathaniel wrote a whole page every Sunday in his column '*The Way It Should Be*'. In the column, he hit out hard at the injustices of the world. He strongly castigated corrupt government officials, describing them with all sorts of negative adjectives. Nathaniel was also the owner of a book publishing company, Elite Publishers, and he had authored three highly acclaimed titles.

In a way, Nathaniel had influenced Douglas' style of writing. Douglas admired the way events and characters were brought alive in Nathaniel's works and he too tried to write like Nathaniel, just as he did Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Richard Wright.

Douglas felt some strange feelings building up within him. He did not know what it was, but he was very excited. The feeling however surpassed normal excitement. Were it not for the fact that it was in his subconscious, he would have known that it was the feeling of acceptance. The feeling of self worth, of self confidence.

"Excuse me please, are you Douglas Kamau?" Nathaniel asked.

"Yes sir," Douglas said happily.

"I'm Nathaniel Budu," he said, his face beaming with joy, and they shook hands. "You are a great writer, indeed."

"Meet my girlfriend Nancy Wanja," Douglas said and Nathaniel turned to face Nancy who stood a few feet away.

"Good morning, Nancy," he said and Nancy moved closer and shook his hand.

"Good morning to you, sir," she replied.

"I was impressed by your copy very much, Douglas. I was one of the judges. It's proof enough that you are potentially a great writer," Nathaniel continued.

"Thank you very much. I'm flattered," Douglas said.

"Which course are you taking at the University?" Nathaniel asked.

"I'm taking anthropolgy. I am a first year student," Douglas said.

"What about you Nancy?" he asked.

"He is my classmate," she said confidently.

"When is the ceremony starting?" Douglas asked.

Nathaniel was on the verge of answering the question when a white man wearing a black double breast suit carrying a black briefcase came in and walked past the reception desk.

"Good morning Mr Fox," Nathaniel greeted.

The man stopped and shook hands with Nathaniel.

"Meet the author of When The Gods Shall Speak", Nathaniel said, patting Douglas on the shoulder.

The man's face shone with brightness.

"You are Douglas Kamau?" Fox asked as he shook Douglas' outstretched hand.

"Yes sir," Douglas answered.

"Congratulations for writing such an excellent piece," Fox said.

"This is his girlfriend, Nancy Wanja," Nathaniel said, pointing at Nancy.

"Good morning, Nancy," Fox greeted and shook her hand.

"Keep up the spirit, Douglas. You are a great writer," Fox said.

Then he began to climb up the stairs leading to the newsroom, a floor above.

"Africa needs writers of your kind, Douglas. Writers who don't believe in the primitive theory of art for art's sake," Nathaniel said.

"We must have writers who are committed to the improvement of life. Writers who seek to change Africa in the social, economic and political fields. Your story had these qualities, Douglas. I was really impressed and I'm very glad to meet you in person."

"I'll try hard to write even better," Douglas said.

"Should you need help in launching yourself in your career, feel free to come to me anytime. I'll be happy to help," Nathaniel said.

"Thank you very much. I'll highly appreciate your assistance," Douglas said.

Nathaniel then glanced at his watch.

"I'm sure you won't mind some coffee. The ceremony is an hour away," Nathaniel said.

"Oh, thank you but we have just taken breakfast," Douglas said.

"You can't turn down my offer. We will talk more over the cup of coffee at Café Bodiso just a block away."

Nathaniel began to move, holding Douglas' hand. The three walked out of the building and into the café.

Thirty minutes later they were back at Nation House.

* * * * *

The award ceremony was wonderful. It was held at the auditorium which adjoined the newsroom on the second floor. Reporters from

different newspapers, magazines and television channels were present. The twenty winners sat on velvet seats which were arranged in two rows of ten seats each. At the front of the auditorium was a raised platform on which sat the organisers of the competition. There was the newspaper's chief editor, William Fox, Nathaniel and other members of the panel of judges.

Among the winners was Douglas who scooped the first prize. He noticed he was the youngest participant. All the others were definitely above twenty five years of age. Douglas felt even more confident because of this as it gave him the hope that he had more time than to perfect his talent.

The ceremony started with several speeches. The chief editor hailed the achievement of his newspaper which had made it possible for them to sponsor the competition. Among other things, he expressed hope that the newspaper would continue encouraging up and coming writers by organising similar competitions.

Nathaniel, speaking in his capacity as the chief judge, lauded the high standard of writing shown in the entries. He particularly expressed his enthusiasm in the leading story which had been written by a young man "with a real grasp of events."

The prizes were given in ascending order. Names were called out and the winners went forward to receive their prizes from the chief editor, amid flashes of light from the press cameras which filled the auditorium. When the nineteen winners had received their prizes, which ranged from one hundred to eight hundred shillings, Nathaniel, who was now going to call out the name of the writer who had written the best story informed them that the writer was to receive a cash prize of two thousand shillings and a portable typewriter.

A hush fell in the room and expectant murmurs followed. Everyone started looking around. The atmosphere was tense as everybody searched with his eyes for the writer of the best story. All this time Douglas, who sat beside Nancy, was trying to hide his excitement, which was nearly exploding within him.

At last Nathaniel named the best writer. Douglas' heart skipped a beat as his name boomed through the loudspeaker. He slowly rose from his seat and began to walk to the front.

There was a wave of murmurs in the entire room and the flash of cameras intensified. Douglas's eyes were nearly blinded by the flashes. He looked at all the people present and he could read the question on their faces. He knew they were marvelling at his achievement and he felt a wave of pride envelope him. He increased his pace and walked fast to the front to receive his prize.

Douglas was given a cheque of two thousand shillings and then shook hands with Mr Fox. Then Nathaniel handed over a portable typewriter to Mr Fox who then gave it to Douglas. As Douglas took the typewriter and shook Mr Fox's hand, there was another explosion of camera flash lights.

Douglas walked back to his seat. Nancy was so pleased that she did not even wait for him to place the typewriter down. She embraced him and kissed him when he was still holding it in his hands. As she did so there was a flash of camera lights as the reporters quickly captured the scene. They all knew that a picture portraying victory and romance would greatly increase their newspapers' sales the following day.

When the ceremony ended, Douglas had a chance to talk to the other winners. He learned that four of them were secondary school teachers, one was unemployed and the rest worked with various companies in Nairobi. Douglas was the only student winner and they all congratulated him for that. He was a very happy man.

Chapter Eight

The blue sleek limousine slowed down and stopped by a news stand, the driver lowered the glass window and flashed a twenty shilling note at the newspaper vendor. The newspaper vendor walked to the car, holding copies of the day's newspapers: *The Kenya Times*, *The East African* and *The Daily Nation*. The driver gave him the money, took the three newspapers and his change, then passed the newspapers to the man seated on the back seat. The car drove on.

Professor Edward Waihenya's eyes first landed on the bold headline, 'A GOLDEN KISS FOR THE BEST WRITER', on the first page of the *Daily Nation*. Then he gazed at the picture below the headline. It was the picture of a girl kissing a boy who was holding a typewriter. He did not need to look at the picture twice to know that the two were Nancy and Douglas. He felt his head suddenly become heavy.

Quickly, he read through the paragraphs though he did not want to. "A first year anthropology student from the University of Nairobi has emerged the best writer in a national essay writing competition organised by our newspaper. Douglas Kamau received his cash prize and a portable typewriter at a colourful ceremony held in our offices yesterday . . . His girlfriend, Nancy Wanja who is the daughter of the African Development Bank's chairman Professor Edward Waihenya, was also present and she was so overcome with emotion that she gave him a kiss worthy of a winner. . ."

Edward clicked his tongue without realising it.

The driver turned to face him and asked, "What is the problem sir?"

It was then that Edward's mind cooled down.

He flashed a wry smile and said, "Nothing much. Just the hangover of last night."

Edward continued gazing at the newspaper without seeing it. He was too busy thinking. He thought about Roger Mathews, about Nancy, Douglas and himself. He thought of how he must please the American tycoon, of how he must make Nancy soften up and accept to be Mathews' girlfriend, of how he must break her relationship with Douglas and of how his friendship with Mathews would help him join the Board of Directors of the World Bank, a position he had always dreamt of getting,

It was not that Edward hated Douglas. To be frank, there was something he greatly admired about him. Edward's objective inner eye saw in Douglas a confident, determined young man with a strong willpower to climb up the social ladder despite difficulties. He admired his determination to excel in a world where he was born a pauper. It was the objective inner eye from deep within Edward that painted this picture of Douglas. But his subjective outer eye merely saw a stumbling block. A threat to his chance of grabbing more of the goodness that the world was offering him. Douglas stood in his way and he knew he must sweep him out or his great hopes would be dashed.

Edward was a crafty man. He knew how to sweep stumbling blocks which threatened his chances of success out of his way. His life history from birth to his present fifty years was of a man whose conscience had been totally killed by greed; a man whose humanity had been eroded beyond repair by acute selfishness and excessive ambition. He was a man who could settle for nothing short of conquering the whole world. A man who believed strongly that he should be above all other people. Indeed, a man who could do any evil to get what he believed he must get.

* * * * *

Edward Waihenya was born in 1940 when colonial rule was at its peak in Kenya. Both his parents were among the newly converted Africans who now embraced the Christian faith whole heartedly and craved for a western lifestyle, not only for themselves but also for their children. Among the new values they acquired from the white man was that formal education held the golden key not only to "civilisation" but also to material prosperity. It was this realisation that made them send their first born, Waihenya, who had already been baptised Edward, to the Catholic mission school in Nyeri town a few kilometres from their home.

Edward was a poor student by conventional standards. It was not that he hated education. In fact, his parents and the Catholic priest of their church, who also was the principal of the school, had indoctrinated him so much that he, like them also, held education with great reverence

and placed a very high premium on it. The truth was that he was just a poor learner and a below average student.

On the surface of his personality, Edward was a polite, humble, soft-spoken and straight forward boy. That was the image he presented to the public. No one would have guessed that beneath the humility lurked another self. An image of a boy craving so much for personal advancement, yet so frustrated by his inability to excel in education. The image of a shrewd and crafty boy who had after a lot of frustrations, decided to overcome his academic handicap through whatever means he could.

Edward began to sit at the back of the classroom. Naturally his classmates knew there was nothing odd about a pupil preferring the back seats. It was understandable for some students to want to be as far away from the teacher as possible. But Edward's reason was different. He knew exactly why he had chosen to position himself there. He knew that it would be a strategic place to ensure his academic survival. No one would see him cheating in examinations by consulting pieces of paper for answers.

Throughout his years in primary school, Edward survived in the academic field through such crafty means. Many were the times when he cheated in the end of term examinations. But even though he did so, he never managed to get more than average marks in the examination. This fact contributed greatly to his never being suspected of cheating.

Then came the challenge of his life. He reached the last class where he was now to face a national examination which would determine whether he would proceed to secondary school or not. Great fear filled him. He knew too well that if he was to sit the examination without the aid of his crafty ways he would definitely fail. He had failed all the examinations he had ever done unaided since he was born. Yes, he had failed because even when he had copied the answers he had never got more than average marks. It was this that made him tremble with fear. He knew too well that he would fail. He would fail terribly if he did not do something.

Though Edward was not bright in class, he was not stupid. He knew that the national examination was set and invigilated by white men

from the Ministry of Education. That was a weapon of the colonial government to make sure that African students failed *en masse* so that very few would qualify for secondary school hence very few would be properly educated. This was because if many Africans were educated they would intensify the struggle against colonial domination and fight for their freedom.

The African teachers could not be trusted to set a tough examination. It was for this reason that the white men had to oversee the whole process.

The examination papers were usually taken to the schools one day to examination apparently to avoid any leakage. Edward knew this and he also knew that the examination papers were kept at the principal's office.

It took Edward a whole month to make a bold decision which involved a great degree of risk. He would go to the principal's office on the night before the examination and check all questions. He would then spend the whole night digging out the answers from his notes. It was a great risk but he knew he must take it. Education was the only conduit to his dreams. It was the only way through which he would have self worth and he had to use it to fight his way through.

Edward made an elaborate plan in advance. He was a shrewd, crafty and secretive boy. He had never told any of his friends that he cheated in the end of term examinations. And he now set to scheme how to get into the principal's office and make a history of sorts by cheating in a national examination. He alone knew what he was planning.

Edward had read many novels on crime and one of those gave him an idea. In the novel, the main character was a thief and had taken a key belonging to a certain man and developed its outline on a bar of soap. Then he had quietly returned the key and had a duplicate made at a key cutter's workshop after which he went to the man's house, opened the door using the duplicated key and stole a lot of property. Edward decided to use such a plan. He had to get a way of getting the key to the principal's office and that of the desk drawers in the office.

Edward knew the principal's behaviour and it was this that he was to capitalise on in his scheme. Father Jethro, for that was the name

of the principal, was fond of sitting under a gum tree which was at the centre of the school near the flag post at ten o'clock. He would remove his small bible from the pocket and start reading a verse here and there. Then he would wait until he sighted a boy nearby and he would call him. Father Jethro would then give the boy the keys to his office and tell him to bring him the flask full of tea and a glass that was on his desk. The boy would rush to the office, get the flask and a glass and take them to Father Jethro. For almost another hour Father Jethro would sip his tea slowly as he read the bible.

All the boys in the school had come to know of Father Jethro's habit and they tried as much as possible not to be near the gum tree when he was there. Thus he sometimes had to go to the office to get the flask himself. Edward decided that to make his plan succeed, he would go near the gum tree deliberately.

One day, Edward hid a small bar of soap in his pocket when going to school. During break time he left the class and instead of walking to the football pitch behind the classrooms as the boys were fond of doing, he deliberately passed in front near the gum tree.

Father Jethro in characteristic style, was seated under the shade of the gum tree, his bible held in his hand as his eyes raced through the verses. Occasionally, he would steal through the corners of his eyes as he tried to spot a boy passing by. He quickly saw Edward.

As Edward came near after being summoned, Father Jethro said, "Go to my office good boy and bring me that flask of tea and glass that is on my desk."

Father Jethro then gave him a bunch of keys.

"Which is the key to the office sir?" Edward asked.

"The green one," Father Jethro replied.

Edward looked at the bunch of seven keys. Only one was green. He began to walk towards the Principal's office.

Edward got into the office and closed the door behind him. The first thing he did was to find out which key opened the three desk drawers that were used to store the sensitive documents. He knew that the examination papers would be locked in the drawers. He tried the keys one by one. The first three did not open but the fourth one opened the

first drawer. He locked it as before and tried the key on the other two drawers. The key opened them too. He locked them and held the bunch of keys in his hand. He then removed the bar of soap from his pocket and pressed the green key on it. He pressed it on the other side also so as to have the impression of both sides. Then he did the same with the key that had opened the three drawers. Edward then wrapped the bar with a piece of paper before putting it back in his pocket. Then he took the flask and glass and got out of the office. He locked the office and hurried to Father Jethro.

In Nyeri town was a man who operated a workshop. Those people who wanted to have spare keys would take their original keys to him and he would cut out an identical key. It was to this man that Edward took the bar of soap with the outline of the keys.

Edward borrowed three shillings from his father, purportedly to buy an exercise book. Instead, he used the money to pay the man for cutting the keys which he put safely in his bedroom. It was just two weeks to the examination.

On the day preceeding the examination, Edward after leaving school in the evening told his parents that he wanted to go to his aunt's home a few kilometres away to get a book from his cousin who was a classmate. His parents believed him when he told them that he badly needed the book in order to prepare for the following day's examination.

Edward went to his aunt's home alright but not to get a book. He went there to buy time as he waited for night fall. He spent the time with his cousin and when the sun started setting and the darkness eventually enveloped the land, he sought to leave.

Edward walked slowly from his aunt's home. He did not however, follow the path that led to his home. He followed the one that led to school.

Before long he was at the school's gate and by then there was total darkness. He paused at the gate and looked at the watchman's house which was near the staffroom. He could see a lantern's light through cracks in the small wooden house. Slowly, the door of the house was opened and somebody holding the lantern got out. Edward saw that it was the watchman. He watched him take some firewood from the

side of the house and then get back inside the house, closing the door behind him. Edward knew then that he had to act fast.

Walking quietly along the path that led to the school, he soon stood at the door of the principal's office.

With a thumping heart and sweat beginning to form all over his body, he inserted the key into the keyhole and turned it clockwise. He heard a clicking sound as it turned. Then he pulled the key out and pushed the door open. There was a creaking noise from the hinges which had never been oiled since the building was erected five years ago. Edward had not thought of this when making his plans.

When the hinges' noise tore through the silent night, Edward's heart missed a beat and began to throb with more vigour. God, I will be caught. He thought. An impulse made him turn to the watchman's house. When he turned he saw the watchman getting out of the house with a torch. Edward quickly slipped into the office through the slightly opened door. He looked again at the watchman through the opening and saw him flashing his torchlight all over the compound. Edward thanked his God that the beam of the giant torchlight did not land on the slightly opened door of the principal's office. Then he saw the watchman go back to the house, obviously convinced that the sound he had just heard was his imagination.

Edward's heart relaxed its heavy beating. He pushed the door slowly to close it, making sure that the hinges produced as little noise as possible. When it was well closed he inserted the key in the key hole and locked it. Then he quickly walked away from the door, ready to begin his "operation."

Edward lit the torch which he had carried in his pocket. He then removed the key which he had cut and quickly inserted it in the first drawer, opened it and looked inside. He fumbled with the mass of papers therein but he did not see the examination papers. He opened the second one. Still the papers were not there. Edward began to panic. Cold drops of sweat began to form on his face and his heart began to pound faster. His mind was running riot.

As his hands began to tremble slightly, he opened the third drawer, fearful that it did not have the papers. If they were not in that drawer

then all his energy and time would go down the drain. He would be a loser and the world would never forgive him. Slowly he pulled out the drawer and looked inside with expectant eyes. The examination papers were there! ✍

Edward took the three big envelopes and placed them on the desk. Each envelope contained a paper for the following day's examination. He removed a pair of pliers and cut out the pins that sealed the envelopes, making sure that no one would notice there had been any tampering. When he was sure that all the three envelopes were opened and that none was damaged in the process of opening, he removed the examination papers carefully and placed them on the desk. Then he extracted an exercise book and pencil from the small bag which he carried. He then copied all the questions in the examination papers into his exercise book.

When he was through he put the papers back into the envelopes, just as they had been. Then he got a stapler from the principal's table and with utmost care replaced the pins in the same holes as the first ones so that no one would ever know the envelopes had been opened. Then he put the envelopes back in the drawer, making sure they were in the same order as before. He pushed back the drawer and he locked it carefully.

Edward, now more nervous than before, put the book and pliers into the bag and collected all the pieces of pins he had cut out from the envelopes. He could not afford leave them on the desk as they would suggest foul play. He put the pins in his pockets, closed the bag and hung it on his right shoulder.

Running the beam of his torch all over the office, he made sure everything was as he had found it. When he was satisfied, he rose from the seat and walked to the door. This time he would not repeat the mistake which had nearly made the watchman catch him. He now knew that the door's hinges would make a loud noise and he took extra care. He inserted the key in the keyhole, unlocked the door with ease and pulled it open slowly. Peeping through, he directed his gaze at the watchman's house. The door was closed and he could see the lantern's light through the cracks. He then pulled the door open slowly and got

out. He closed it equally slowly, and locked it. Then he began to walk away.

Edward walked from the office and started running on tiptoe. He could hear the loud pounding of his heart as he moved and his shirt was beginning to get wet as sweat formed on his body. He did not turn to look back. In fact, he did not have the time to do so as he was preoccupied with how to disappear quickly from the school compound.

When he passed through the school gate, Edward turned for the first time. The watchman's house was still closed and the light could still be seen through the cracks. He then broke into a run. As he reached home nothing made him happier than the knowledge that his was a mission well accomplished.

That night Edward did not sleep early. He spent six hours digging the answers to the questions from his notes. He wrote the answers down in a note book and memorised them. Then he retired to bed at four o'clock, tired to the bone. It was the first time he had slept that late.

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In the morning he woke up early and again memorised the answers. Soon, he could sing them better than the Ten Commandments Father Jethro had forced them to recite every morning at assembly. When he was confident that he knew all the answers he burned the notebook and threw the two keys in a pit latrine.

One hour later, Edward was in the examination room, confident as never before in his life.

When the examination results were announced two months later, the whole school was stunned. No one, including Father Jethro, could have dreamt of Edward Waihenya scoring all the marks to get grade 'A' in the examination. His parents were happy and they rejoiced openly. To them, it was Jesus who had touched their son with his hand of mercy to make sure that he passed well although he had not been performing in classwork.

Edward became a village hero. And like the other village heroes who had been the best in their years he had to go to secondary school

with a scholarship from the Catholic church. He duly joined Mangu High School which was one of the best at the time.

No one ever came to know that there had been foul play in Edward's sudden rise to academic supremacy.

* * * * *

At Mang'u High School, life proved not as simple as it had been in primary. The teachers were more strict during examinations and cheating was nearly impossible. When Edward tried his old tricks during an end of term examination, he was found out and received six strokes of the cane as well as a threat of expulsion if he continued with the habit.

Edward was now in a dilemma. He was faced with two choices and he had to take one of them. The first involved pulling up his socks and trying to survive in the academic world of Mangu, and the second involved continuing to fail the examinations and subsequently getting expelled. Edward chose to do his best to improve his academic performance. He resolved with a solemn vow that he must retain himself in Mang'u, this time not at all costs but at just one cost; working harder and excelling in the academic world.

Edward threw all his effort on his solemn vow. At home he spent all his free time reading. He slept late at night, having spent those hours reading seriously. To ensure that he did not fall asleep before he had read enough, he would put cold water in a bucket and dip his legs in. He read with the legs immersed in water and the cold prevented him from falling asleep. He would wake up at around four and read yet again until it was time to take his breakfast.

This proved productive over time. He never managed to be the star of his class nor a darling of his teachers but he improved remarkably. For a student who had been relying on cheating to pass his examinations getting average grades honestly was indeed a great achievement.

When he sat for his final examination after the four years, Edward got an average mark and did not qualify to be admitted to an institution of higher learning. His villagers who had placed a very high premium

on him by virtue of the fact that he had passed very well in primary school were greatly shocked. They wondered what had happened with him and they felt betrayed.

Edward, now the laughing stock of the village, knew that he must devise another trick to cheat a world that demanded academic prowess if one was to rise up the social ladder. This time his eyes were cast at the highest pillar of learning where failure in Mang'u had denied him entry into the university.

In those days there was no university in Kenya. There was only one university which catered for the whole of East Africa and this prestigious university was in Kampala, Uganda. After leaving Mang'u, Alliance and other secondary schools, Kenyan students who passed the examination proceeded to Makerere University under a government scholarship. Alternatively, they were sponsored by the church and in some cases by African political movements, always with the hope that they would come back intellectually sharpened and be better placed to eject the much hated colonialists.

Edward decided that he must come up with a plan that would see him through the competitive gates of Makerere.

He was well aware of the corruption inherent in the government's administrative bureaucracy for the vice had gained ground in Kenya. Civil servants, especially the Africans who rose to strategic clerical positions could have done almost anything for a bribe of several shillings. Edward was to embrace palm greasing and corrupt his way to Makerere. He would bribe the officials at the Kenya Examination Board's headquarters and have another certificate printed for him which would show that he had passed at Mangu and was therefore qualified to get a government scholarship.

* * * * *

At the Kenya Examination Board, there was a system whereby the students who were dissatisfied with their examination results applied to have them remarked. In some cases, though rarely, students who had failed in the examination and had been issued with a certificate

indicating that they were failures were found to have passed. In such cases the Board had to print new certificates and update their records. Edward figured that if he bribed the right person in the Board, he would have his case treated as if his work had been remarked and he had passed.

If he was issued with that certificate, he would immediately attach it to an application letter which he would send to the Ministry of Education asking for a scholarship to Makerere. Usually those who passed well in the examination were guaranteed of the scholarship.

At the moment, the only major problem which Edward knew he must overcome was the source of money to bribe his way through if the plan was to succeed. To be on the safe side and so as to cope with unforeseen emergencies he knew he must get three hundred shillings.

It was a race against time. The deadline for receipt of the university scholarship application letters was just a month away. Edward did not want to be locked out. He wanted success and he wanted it fast.

Therefore he set the plan in motion immediately it came to his mind. He began to search for a job. With the certificate which he had got after leaving Mang'u, he was well equipped to get a job. In those days, very few people were educated and even those who failed in Form Four still wielded a lot of prestige and had employment potential. The only difference was that unlike their counterparts who had passed they could not proceed for further studies. Edward quickly got a job as a clerical officer with a church-sponsored organisation working for the promotion of literacy in rural Kenya.

In characteristic style of the shrewd man he was, he set out one week after being employed to convince the director of the organisation to lend him three hundred shillings which he would pay in small amounts every month. The director, a Catholic bishop, was very understanding and it was his goodness that Edward exploited.

Edward convinced the director that his brother had fallen ill and that he needed money for the hospital bill immediately. The director could not have refused to lend him and continue calling himself a man of God. So, he obliged and gave him the money. Edward did not have a brother; he had two sisters and neither of them was sick. His father also was not jobless but was employed as a house boy by a white man in Nairobi.

When Edward got the money, he took one week's leave allegedly to take the money to Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi where his brother was sick and nearly dying.

Edward left Nyeri very early in the morning one day and headed for Nairobi. He was not a frequent visitor to the city but he knew that the offices of the Kenya Examination Board were on Conference House. He also knew that the house was the tallest in the country. Even the boys who had never been to Nairobi knew this. So when he arrived in Nairobi and alighted from the bus he just walked in the direction of the tallest building as it was visible from all angles of the city.

At the entrance of the house was a board indicating where different offices were to be found. Edward read through the board and found out that the offices he sought were on fourth floor. He then went to the lift, got in and headed for the fourth floor.

Edward felt into his pockets as he walked to the reception desk where a young man sat, reading the day's paper. Even as Edward stood at the desk, the man seemed so engrossed in the newspaper that he didn't notice his presence.

"Excuse me sir," Edward said.

The man turned and faced him.

"Yes please, can I help you?" the man asked.

"Yes sir, I wanted to enquire from you whom I can talk to about a Form Four certificate," Edward said.

"What exactly do you want done?" the man asked.

"To be issued with a certificate," Edward said.

"You don't have a certificate yet you have finished Form Four?" the man asked.

"I am asking who I can speak with to get one," Edward said.

"We aren't communicating young man. I can't understand you and you don't understand me. I'm asking you whether you have finished school but haven't been issued with a certificate," the man said.

Edward turned around and made sure there was no one near. Then he faced the man and said, "I want to make a deal to get another certificate that shows I passed."

The man smiled. He then looked around and made sure there was no one nearby.

Then he turned to Edward and said in a whisper. "Do you have something small?"

"I'll cough up something if the deal is possible," Edward said. He too was talking in whispers. Both, in fact, were whispering without realising it. They had to whisper because there was something strongly embedded in their conscience; the knowledge that they were breaking one of the country's laws. The knowledge that they were fanning corruption.

"What grade did you get?" the man asked.

"I got C-," Edward said.

"You finished school last year?"

"Yes," Edward answered.

"Which school were you in?"

"Mang'u High school."

The man paused as he nibbled his pen. He seemed deep in thought.

"Can I see the certificate," he said after a while.

"What?" Edward asked.

He had been busy thinking about how he had lied to the director. Would he find out the truth one day? this question pecked at the back of his mind.

"I'm asking you to give me the certificate," the man said.

Edward fished it out of the paper bag he held and gave it to the man. The latter took it and read it. Edward could not help thinking about the man's perception of him. Obviously, he thinks I am a dunderhead, he thought. This made him even more determined to use whatever means at his disposal to wash out the shame. It was a stigma which had been implanted in him and which he knew he must be rid of. No one would ever convince him that God cared only for those who excelled in school. If God did not despise those who were poor in education, Edward reasoned, then why was society despising them? Why did society insist that good grades in education made a human being more human than others? All these Edward could not understand. But he understood that society was unfair. He would cheat it to conform to its demands. He too was a child of the universe.

The man turned to him and asked, "How much do you have?"
"I had thought one hundred shillings isn't," Edward said and looked at the man straight in the eyes.

The man twitched on eyelid.

"That is a big joke young man. This is a risky job," he said.

"How soon can the job be finished?" Edward asked.

"You can get it within three hours. That is why I am insisting that you talk well."

"What figure did you have in mind?"

"Two hundred and fifty is not very bad, though it is still very little," the man said.

"We must strike a compromise between the two. Why don't we make it two hundred?" Edward asked.

"Two twenty is the least I can take," the man said.

"It's okay with me," Edward said.

He would pay the bribe and still be left with enough pocket money.

"Have a seat over there please and take this newspaper to keep you busy," the man said.

Edward took the newspaper and walked towards the chairs indicated. He sat down and opened the newspaper.

As he began to read, he saw the man get up from his seat, the certificate in his hand and go to the inner offices. God, please make the plan go through, Edward prayed silently as he began to leaf through the pages.

Edward waited for about twenty long minutes after which the man appeared.

He came to him and said in a whisper, "What grade do you want?" Edward thought quickly.

"The one that will get me a scholarship to study economics at Makerere," he said.

He had heard that many people who had studied economics at the university and who had become great men. He wanted to be a great man too.

"You're planning to go to Makerere?" the man asked.

"I want to think about it," Edward said.

"Okay, can I get the money now that we are alone?" the man said.

Edward dug into his pocket and produced the notes which he had wrapped in a newspaper. Then the man returned to where he had come from in the inner office.

A few minutes later the man came back to resume his work of manning the reception desk. Already, a group of people who wanted to be served had milled to the desk and were complaining bitterly at the poor services.

Before he began to serve the people, the man went to Edward and whispered into his ear, "You will have to wait about three hours."

Three and a half hours later, Edward saw a man emerge from the inner offices and talk to the receptionist. He gave the latter a large envelope and then went back. The receptionist served a visitor and then beckoned Edward. When Edward walked to the desk, the man opened the envelope and produced a certificate. Edward's eyes devoured the clean piece of paper.

"This is your certificate Mr Waihenya," the man said as he handed it over.

Edward took it and ran his eyes on it curiously. Yes, it was a brand new certificate. Instead of the dehumanising C- there was now a B+. The certificate indicated that he had got an A and A- in Mathematics and Commerce respectively. He looked at the signatures for the Kenya Examination Board's officials. They were exactly the same as the ones the other certificate had. He looked at the official stamp at the right hand side and it was genuine. The new certificate was as genuine and real as the former one. The only difference was that the new one held hopes for his rise while the first one held only doom. The C- that had been so clearly inscribed therein was a ladder down to the abyss of poverty and worthlessness.

Edward put the certificate back into an envelope and slipped it into a paper bag. Then he thanked the receptionist and quickly walked out of the office. He wanted to run.

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One day later Edward sent an application letter for a scholarship to study economics at Makerere University, to the Ministry of Education headquarters. The government, through the director of the National

Scholarship Board, informed him that he had been offered a scholarship to study economics at Makerere. As usual, the board had already negotiated for his admission at the university.

Edward did not tell his employer the truth about why he was leaving. He could not have told him that he was going to join Makerere University. If he told him that, the employer would wonder how he had managed to be admitted and to get a scholarship yet he had failed the examination. Being a Christian fanatic, as Edward thought of him, he might even investigate the matter and if he found out that Edward had cheated he would raise the alarm. So instead, Edward told him that he had found another job somewhere else.

* * * * *

One month after quitting his job, Edward arrived at Makerere to study economics. He decided that he must employ all his energy to make sure that he passed in the examinations. He became what students were fond of calling a bookworm. He slept late at night, having spent many hours reading and before long his added vigour earned fruits. He began to make an impact as an academician. Many factors were in his favour. The most important was his zeal to achieve his goal; the zeal to remove the stigma which society had implanted in him. The second was that unlike the lower levels of learning, education at the university was fairly simple. The pass mark was merely forty percent and that was not hard to get.

Although he improved his academic standing and he no longer had to rely on cheating, Edward still retained his devious and crafty character which he continued to put to good. In his second year, he employed his crafty character to pave way for his rise to student leadership.

Although Edward was popular among the students in Makerere, he was not as popular as one Dennis Okol, who was a third year political science student. The elections for the office bearers of the Makerere University Students Union (MUSU) were held every year. Okol had held the post of chairman for a year and he wanted to vie for another term.

Edward, aware of the gains of becoming chairman of the union, had decided that he must challenge Okol for the post. It was not that he was fond of students politics, or was concerned about the students' welfare. His only craving was for prestige and personal gain. He wanted to be recognised as a force in the university. He wanted to enjoy the social and economic gains that went with the post. No one would have convinced him that it was wrong to take bribes from politicians so as to incite students to political agitation. This was the drive that was pulling him to the dais to challenge the much more popular and morally upright Okol.

Okol was a darling of most students. He was a radical public speaker whose eloquent speeches sent the students chanting in excitement and applauding in a frenzy. After just one campaign rally at the campus, Edward was convinced that he could not unseat Okol through the ballot box. He knew that he would thus have to use other means to do so. And he immediately began to plan how.

The following day, Edward went to one of the slums in Kampala and bought three rolls of bhang from a dealer. When he went back to the campus he monitored the movement of Okol and made sure that the latter had gone to class in the afternoon hours. Then he went to Hall Eight where Okol resided. He knew that he occupied room number thirteen. Quickly, Edward went to the room and opened the door with one of his keys. The locks of the campus doors were such that a special key could be used to open many locks. As he got into the room, Edward ensured that no one had seen him.

He raised the pillow on Okol's bed and placed the three rolls of bhang under it. Then he quickly got out of the room. No one saw him leave the room. He went straight to the telephone booth outside the hall and placed a call with the Central Police Station in Kampala. He informed the officer who took the call that there was a student at Makerere University who was a drug addict and had hidden bhang in his room. He told him Okol's room number and hall number. Edward refused to disclose his name, just saying he was an anonymous caller who was disgusted by the widespread use of drugs at the university. He then hang up and left the booth.

Five hours later the whole university community went wild when news of Okol's arrest was made. No rational student could have bought the argument that their leader had been arrested for possessing drugs in his room. What everybody except Edward could have sworn with the bible was that the government was determined to root Okol out of students' leadership. This argument was not wholly unjustified. There were many clues that bore out the students' belief that their leader was a victim of government intimidation.

A few months earlier, Okol had led the students in a demonstration against the government's repression of dissent and the continued influx of expatriate personnel into the country. He had been briefly detained without a charge being preferred against him and was only released when students took to the streets in protest. That arrest had not daunted Okol. He had, immediately after the release, issued a press statement calling on the government to immediately stop flooding the university with Special Branch operatives who monitored students' activities with a view to intimidating those with critical views. There were many other incidents that had established Okol as a radical anti-government student leader. That was why everybody now believed the government was arresting him just to keep him off MUSU leadership with the hope of depoliticising the organisation.

When news of Okol's arrest was confirmed, students took to the streets to demonstrate for his release. The police acted fast and they brutally crushed the demonstrations. Then the government released a terse statement saying that Okol had been arrested for possessing three rolls of bhang in his room and that he would be taken to court in a day's time.

The following day all the students boycotted classes and streamed the Kampala law courts where Okol was to be tried. Only a few of them could fit into the courtroom. The rest stayed outside and were watched closely by armed policemen.

The trial lasted thirty minutes. Okol's lawyer who had been hired by MUSU made a spirited fight for Okol's acquittal but in vain. The judge did not buy the argument that somebody had planted the drugs in his client's room. Okol was duly sentenced to one month in jail without option of a fine.

More student riots followed the judgement but the police quelled them all with even more brutality. Although the following day's newspapers reported that there were no deaths, the truth was that several students died while others were injured in the mayhem. Edward saw with his own eyes three students lying dead in the streets, their bodies riddled with bullets. Even then, he was not remorseful. He did not feel guilty. His conscience was so dead that he could not feel the weight of the role he had played in bringing all these about.

The end of Okol's era from Makerere politics could not change things much. Life had to continue. The elections went on with the university senate calling on more people to come up and vie for the post of chairman. Three more candidates stood out but none of them was as popular as Edward, who was then a front runner. When the elections were conducted Edward emerged the winner with a clear majority.

Later, Edward graduated from Makerere with a second class honours degree in economics and came back to Kenya where he easily secured a job at the Central Bank.

After working for three years, he landed a government scholarship to advance his studies and he left Kenya for the University of London. There he got both his masters and PhD degrees in economics.

* * * * *

When he returned to Kenya in 1967, Edward was made the Deputy Governor of Central Bank. One year later he married Emily Wawira who was then working as a secretary with the Ministry of Agriculture.

It was now five years after independence and the government was encouraging Africanisation of key posts both in the public and private sector. In doing this the government hoped to give local people more control of their country so as to make their independent real. Many British nationals who had been holding key positions were replaced with Africans. However, there were still a few areas where expert services were needed as the Africans were yet to acquire the right skills. One such post was that of Governor of Central Bank.

Edward began to eye the post immediately he was made the Deputy Governor upon his arrival from London. Before he had even worked for five months he had already made a decision that he must get the post regardless of the means. He decided to use his crafty ways to oust the Governor, Ian Kinnock.

Kinnock was a womaniser and Edward came to know that from the very first day he joined the Bank. That was the weakness Edward decided to exploit, knowing perfectly well that if Kinnock left, he would automatically replace him by virtue of being his deputy.

Edward soon began weaving a sex trap for Kinnock. Both men were good friends and Kinnock could never have imagined that Edward was plotting his downfall. They usually went on drinking sprees together and both took their girlfriends out for treats, despite the fact that both were married. They also worked together in defrauding the bank of huge sums of money through unscrupulous means. Despite this, Edward schemed on how to bring Kinnock down. It was their seemingly genuine friendship that he would use to make good his evil plan.

During his drinking sprees, Edward was fond of picking up one maid and prostitutes. There was one beautiful prostitute he had come to develop a close relationship with. They had become so close that sometimes he would not pay her. It was she that he decided to use in his plan.

One day, after making love to her in a lodging, Edward explained exactly what he wanted her to do. He would introduce her to a certain white man and she was to behave as if she loved the man very much, even allowing him to make love to her. Then she would rush out of the room with only her skirt on and start screaming that the white man had raped her. There would be a reporter waiting to take pictures of the scene. The girl would tell the reporter how the white man had seduced her and taken her to the room and how he had raped her when she refused to have sex with him. To do all this, the prostitute would get one thousand shillings from Edward.

Jane, the prostitute, could not say no to anything that involved good money. Sex peddling was her career and she saw nothing wrong in

doing what Edward was telling her. One thousand shillings was too much money to let slip through her fingers. She was only used to ten or twenty shillings from customers. If she was lucky she could get a hundred shillings at times but the customer had to be quite rich.

Edward gave her five hundred shillings and promised to give her the other half when the job was done. He told her that he would go with the white man to Buru Buru Bar one day and introduce her to him. Then she would do as he had directed.

Edward had a friend who worked as a reporter with the Nation newspaper. He told him about the deal he had and told him that he must rush to Buru Buru Bar at a moment's notice. The reporter would take pictures of Jane and Kinnock and interview her so that the story and pictures would appear in the next day's paper.

When Edward told Kinnock that they should go for a few beers at a bar in Buru Buru after work one Thursday evening, Kinnock did not find anything unusual in that. So after work, the two men drove to Buru Buru.

Edward had sent a note to Jane immediately Kinnock agreed to the outing. She had taken the instructions carefully and began to act fast. She changed into her very best clothes, had her hair redone and applied faint lipstick and the best perfume she could lay her hands on. At the end of it all, she looked like a respectable woman working in a prestigious companies in Nairobi.

From where she was at a roadside kiosk near the bar, Jane saw two cars drive to the bar and stop. Edward got out of the first car and a white man from the other. The two walked briskly into the bar.

Jane waited about fifteen minutes and then walked in. She looked around without making it obvious that she was looking. Then she spotted Edward and the white man who were talking happily as they sipped their drinks. She walked gracefully and sat at a table next to theirs.

Edward was a good actor. When Jane sat at the next table he looked at her carefully and then feigned surprise.

"Oh, is it you Jane or are my eyes cheating me?" he asked

Jane turned, and like a Hollywood actress, she played her part expertly.

"Oh, Edward, so it is you?" she asked with false excitement.

"Where have you been all these years?" Edward asked.

"I arrived last month from Uganda," she said as she left her seat and walked to Edward's table.

She greeted him with a hearty handshake.

"Oh, meet my friend Ian Kinnock," Edward said as he patted Kinnock on the shoulder.

Jane shook Kinnock's hand.

"I'm glad to meet you," Mr Kinnock answered with a broad smile.

"Have a seat please," Edward said as he beckoned the waiter.

"Bring another round of Tusker please," he said.

Jane sat between Edward and Kinnock.

"When did you go to Uganda?" Edward asked.

The waiter brought the drinks and opened them.

"That beer is yours, Jane," Edward said.

"I went there three years ago," Jane answered.

"What business took you there?" Edward continued.

"I was at Makerere University," she replied.

"Oh, shake my hand young girl. So you proceeded to university?" Edward asked. "Which course did you take?"

"I did political science. I'm now working with the Office of the President," Jane said.

"Mr Kinnock, I'm sure you will be delighted to come across a female political scientist. She used to be my schoolmate in primary school but I haven't seen her since," Edward continued.

"Do you work in Nairobi?" Jane asked.

"Yes. After primary school I went to Mang'u and then to Makerere to study economics. I arrived a few months ago from Britain where I did my masters and PhD in economics at London University. By the way, my friend Kinnock is the governor of Central Bank. I'm his assistant."

"Congratulations Edward. That's, it is a big achievement." She and then turned to Kinnock.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr Kinnock."

"Pleasure to meet you, Jane," he said.

Suddenly, a man entered the bar and looked around. Edward knew that it was his house boy but he pretended not to have seen him. It was all part of the plan. The man walked briskly to Edward's table.

"I'm sorry to disturb you sir but it is an emergency. There is someone who wants to talk to you at home," the man said.

Jane and Kinnock turned to face the man.

"Who can that be?" Edward asked pretending to be irritated.

"He says that he is from Nyeri."

"How the hell did you know that I was here?"

"Mrs Waihenya advised me to check for you here," the house boy said. Edward threw a glance at his watch.

"Where is your home?" Jane asked.

"Just here in Buru Buru," Edward replied. "Let me rush and see who that visitor is. I'll be back in a minute."

Jane and Kinnock nodded.

Edward rose from the seat and together with the servant walked out. They got into his car and drove home.

Edward drove back to the bar an hour later. Jane had assured him that within thirty minutes she would have seduced Kinnock to a point of driving him crazy with passion but he deliberately added himself another thirty minutes to be sure.

As he left the car and walked into the bar he could imagine the passionate smiles Jane was showering Kinnock with and the lust to make love to her that must be radiating in his eyes. He knew Kinnock's private life well to know the effect women had on him.

As he got into the bar, he looked at Kinnock's table and saw Kinnock kissing Jane as he caressed her thighs. A job well done, he thought as he walked briskly to the table. Kinnock relaxed his grip on Jane when he saw Edward.

"I'm sorry for taking so long," Edward said.

Nevertheless I can see you have been having a good time." Both Jane and Kinnock smiled.

"She is a beauty," Kinnock said.

He was now drunk and he spoke with a slur, a strong desire for Jane showing in his drunken eyes. Kinnock caressed her breasts and kissed her again.

"Let's get moving now. I'm sure you've had enough drinks, Mr Kinnock," Edward said after a while,

"No, Edward. Go alone. I'm remaining here with my queen," Kinnock replied.

"What do you mean?" Edward asked.

"I mean that I'm remaining here with Jane. We have many things to talk about," Kinnock said.

"I also live here in Buru Buru," she said in the direction of Edward. "My house is number 252."

"I live in house number 36. You're welcome to pop in any time. Well, I think I'll be going. See you tomorrow in the office Mr Kinnock. See you Jane."

Edward began to walk out of the bar and Kinnock and Jane rose. They held each other's hand and walked to the office of the bar attendant a few metres from the entrance. Kinnock left Jane standing at the door of the office and went in to pay for a room. He was issued with a key to room number 9. Kinnock then left the office and holding Jane's hand, they climbed the stairs to the first floor where the room was.

At his table, the reporter smiled, sipped his beer and switched on his camera's flash devise. He knew that very soon he would be springing into action.

All was calm for about twenty minutes. Then suddenly everyone in the bar nearly bolted when a loud scream tore through the building. The reporter rushed to the stairs and climbed up in a hurry, the camera in his hand. More screams came and everyone was now rushing up the stairs to the rooms.

The excited and curious people milled outside room number 9 where the screams were coming from. The reporter jostled with the confused crowd and made sure that he was at the frontline. Then suddenly the door of the room was pulled open and Jane dashed out, screaming even more. She didn't have her shoes on and neither did she have her blouse. All she had was a skirt, and her bare breasts flapped on her body as she rushed out. She held in her hand a blouse and a pair of pants.

The reporter was ready with his camera and immediately she got out of the room, he pressed the shooting pin and Jane was immediately blinded by the flashlight. He took more pictures of her and the crowd, few seconds later, Kinnock stormed out of the room, fuming with rage.

He did not have his shoes nor his shirt. All he had were his trousers which he was still buttoning as he stormed out of the room. The reporter was quick to take several snaps of him too.

Jane was shouting at the top of her voice, saying she had been raped and pointing at Kinnock who was by now overwhelmed by confusion. He could not tune his drunk mind to comprehend the whole scene, however much he tried. All he could remember was that he had just begun to make love to Jane when she began to scream and to push him away.

The policemen, who had been patrolling the nearby streets, heard the screams and quickly rushed to the bar. By the time they arrived at room 9 the reporter was busy scribbling in his notebook what Jane was saying as he bombarded her with questions. What exactly happened? Are you sure he raped you? That he insisted on having sex but you refused? For how long have you known him? Will you sue him in a court of law . . . ?

By the time the two policemen arrived, the crowd was already in a frenzy. They were all angry at the white man for having raped an African girl. It was only five years after independence and the Kenyans' hate for the white man had not yet dissipated. This hate was always rekindled in their subconscious mind whenever they saw a white man. That a white man had raped an African woman fuelled their hatred even more and made them want to rain heavy blows on Kinnock. He was lucky for it was only one person who had landed a slap across his face when the policemen arrived and prevented further assault.

Twenty minutes later, both Kinnock and Jane were in a police van heading for the Nairobi Police Station to record statements.

The following day's Nation carried an exclusive coverage of the case under the banner headline: 'WHITE CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR RAPES BLACK GIRL'. In the same page was the photograph of the girl with only her skirt on and beside it that of Kinnock as he struggled to button his trousers.

Kinnock was declared guilty by the country even before the courts tried him. He was released on bond but there was much hue and cry in the entire country. The case had brought to the fore memories of the colonial era when white men had demeaned and dehumanised the

Africans. To them, Kinnock's case was one of racism. No one could have convinced them that Kinnock had not raped Jane as a way of dehumanising her by virtue of her being an African.

Local, provincial and national leaders, including ministers, issued press statements while others convened press conferences to bitterly condemn Kinnock's action. They did not mince words in calling for his immediate sacking if he did not resign voluntarily. The following day the government relieved Kinnock of his duties as Central Bank Governor. The government reached this decision in fear of being seen by citizens as encouraging the colonial notion of white superiority. Indeed, people were convinced that it was racism.

Kinnock took the next flight and left for London soon after receiving news of his sacking. He was very depressed. He still was in confusion but at the back of his mind he knew the whole thing had been stage-managed. He was almost sure that Edward must have been the architect of the evil plan. But there was nothing he could do. He was a rapist in the eyes of Kenyans and nothing he could say could wash away that label. All he could do was get out of the country and hope that the wound inflicted on him would heal with time. But he doubted whether the stigma would ever leave him even if he lived for a million years.

When the Board of Directors of the Central Bank met to deliberate on who would replace Kinnock, their choice was obvious. They were all unanimous in endorsing Professor Edward Waihenya as the next governor.

Edward remained the Governor until 1986 when he was appointed Chairman of the African Development Bank. He bribed most of the members of the selection board using the immense wealth he had acquired over the years by embezzling money from Central Bank. Through this, he was able to hold at bay the other two candidates, a Nigerian and Egyptian who were more qualified than him.

At present, as Edward sat comfortably at the back seat of his expensive limousine, he was convinced that the stumbling block was Douglas, but it would not be hard to sweep him out. His mind raced back to the past as he gazed at the newspaper without seeing it. It raced to that night in Father Jethro's office. To that day in the Kenya Examination Board's offices. The day in Okol's room at Makerere

University and to that day in Buru Buru Bar. It raced also to that day with members of the African Development Bank's selection board ...

Finally it stopped at the picture of Douglas as he kissed Nancy passionately on the front page of the newspaper. He began to look at the newspaper once again.

Douglas must be removed from the scene! Edward cursed within him as the limousine came to a halt at his office. Then suddenly an idea struck him. He would do to Douglas what he had done to Okol in Makerere thirty years ago.

Chapter Nine

Mike Kinga increased his pace as he walked from the students' shopping centre at the University of Nairobi towards Hall Nine. He began to climb the stairs when he got there, with all the confidence he could muster so as not to look like the visitor he was. He went past the ground floor onto the first floor.

He did not climb further upstairs. He moved to the left along a passage sandwiched by different rooms, all the while looking at the numbers on the doors without making it obvious that he was doing so. Then at last he came to Room 106.

Mike rapped at the door twice. It was not that he was expecting anybody to be in. He knew that the occupant of the room had gone out of the campus hence he was just making sure. He then removed the single key in his pocket and inserted it in the keyhole. He turned it clockwise and the lock opened without difficulty. Removing the key from the keyhole, he pushed the door open. Then he quickly walked in, closing the door behind him and locking it.

Mike sprang into action. He removed a penknife from his pocket and moved to Douglas' bed. He removed the pillow and uncovered the blankets and the bedsheets to reach the blue mattress. Holding the mattress cover carefully at the edge he slit it open. Then he cut deep into the mattress such that he made a deep hole in it. He dug his other hand into his coat pocket and produced a small transparent paper packet which was full of a white powder. He slotted the packet into the hole in the mattress, spread back the sheets, the blankets and adjusted the pillow accordingly. The job was done!

As Mike left the campus compound and headed for the bus stop a distance from Serena Hotel, he heaved a heavy sigh of relief and began to budget for the five thousand shillings he had just earned.

It was however very odd for Mike to undertake such a job. Had he been seasoned criminal, he would have dismissed the successful completion of his mission as something normal. However, that was not the case. It was the first time he had engaged in an illegal activity and the way in which he had come to fall into the trap was one he had not thought of at all.

Mike was nineteen years old and had just completed Form Four. He had been looking for a job for the last eight months since leaving school but he had not succeeded in securing one. It was not that he had failed the National examination. He had passed with grade C and was qualified to get a job of a clerical officer or even better.

Despite this, corruption in the country had proved to be a great handicap. In every office he visited he was told to offer some amount of money to buy his way into the employment world. The experience was depressing and frustrating but Mike had not yet given up hope. He could not give up when he knew too well that his parents were poor and could not afford the kind of money needed for the bribe. The best thing he could do was to keep hoping that one day he would land in an office where he would meet a good man.

Three days ago he had decided to try his luck at the African Development Bank, Central Bank and other financial institutions, for he had heard that most banks only considered qualifications and did not require bribes. The first visit he made was to the African Development Bank offices at Lilian Towers.

At the reception desk, Mike had insisted that he wanted to speak to the bank's chairman, citing the reason for his visit as "personal." The receptionist had tried to impress upon him that it was futile to try and see the chairman but Mike insisted. To please him, the receptionist had rang the Chairman's secretary and waited for a few minutes. Then the secretary had rang her back and surprisingly Mike was allowed to proceed to the chairman's office.

"Good morning young man," Edward greeted as Mike walked into the office.

Mike kept his hands at his back as a sign of respect. He knew the man before him held immense power over his fate. He could decide to say yes to his request for a job and his life would be transformed overnight.

"Good morning, sir," Mike said in a polite, humble way.

"Can I help you?" Edward asked.

"Yes sir," Mike began. "Sir, I finished Form Four last year and got grade C, sir. Please sir. . . offer me a job. Please ... I come from a very poor family and we are suffering. Please offer me a job in your bank, sir. God will bless you."

Edward tilted his glasses and smiled at the young man. His face was a mixture of sympathy and indifference. He was silent for a moment, busy thinking. He knew beyond any shadow of doubt that the boy before him was the very one he needed for elimination of Douglas from the scene. In fact, that was the very reason he had let the boy get past the reception desk. When his secretary had rang him to say there was a boy who wanted to see him for personal reasons, he had as usual pressed a button at his desk and the screen that was on the wall directly facing him had brought a clear picture of the boy. He had noted that the boy was shabbily dressed and he did not look confident at all. From his many years as an administrator, Edward could tell that the boy was most likely a job seeker. In characteristic style, his mind had immediately raced to what mattered most to him; accomplishing his goal. It was not long before he decided that the boy would be useful in eliminating Douglas from his path to progress. Unlike the other days, he had pressed the intercom and directed the receptionist to let the boy proceed to his office.

"I sincerely sympathise with you young man. I know the problems that face the unemployed in this country," Edward said.

That was a plain lie and Edward knew it. He was not one to care for the problems of the unemployed, otherwise he would not take so much pleasure in turning them away. If he was to be frank, to himself and to the world, he would have admitted that he had turned away hundreds of jobseekers even those who were qualified to get jobs which he later offered them to the less qualified children of his friends and relatives. In some instances he offered them to those who were ready to bribe him. So it was not sympathy for the boy that had made him order that he gets past the reception. It was his intention to use him as a tool in his plans that made him do it.

"What is your name?" Edward asked.

"My name is Mike Kinga, sir."

"Where do you come from?"

"I come from Dandora, sir."

"You say you had grade C?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you badly need a job."

"Yes, sir," Mike said. Edward studied him carefully and scratched his chin.

Then he said in well calculated words, "I am willing to help you Mike but I also think that you should be willing to help me." Mike's face brightened. A job in African Development Bank!

"I'm very ready to help you where necessary, sir," Mike said. Edward nodded his head and tilted his glasses.

"There is something small I would like you to do for me," Edward said.

Mike's face was brightening even more and his eyes emitted curious expectancy.

"What would you like me to do sir?" he asked.

"I'll explain to you but not in the office," Edward said.

Edward had then told Mike that he would explain everything over a cup of coffee in one of the city hotels. The two had got out of the office and gone to the parking lot. For the first time in his life Mike was carried in a limousine to Cafe Diplomat.

Mike was surprised that a rich man would want to take a poor boy like him for coffee but he was even more surprised at what Edward told him. Edward said he was willing to offer him a good job at the African Development Bank if he was ready to do him a little service. Mike waited for him to spell out the service in question and at last he did.

Edward wanted him to plant cocaine in room 106 of Hall Nine at the University of Nairobi's main campus after which he would get five thousand shillings. Mike was shocked. If he had imagined anything fishy in the whole game, he had not thought it would be of such dangerous magnitude. He had never in his life touched cocaine let alone seen it, though he knew perfectly well that it was a drug which could make one spend countless years in jail.

Why did this man whom he respected and revered so much want to plant drugs in somebody's room at the university? This thought troubled him. It troubled him because he only had one picture of rich men in his mind. The holier-than-thou image which they presented to the world. The sweet words they spoke in public rallies and press

conferences. He did not know their other side; the image they could not portray to the public; the image of evil schemers in three-piece suits.

As he drowned in his sea of confusion, Mike's mind focussed on the five thousand shillings that Edward had promised. He remembered that, that very morning he had not taken breakfast as there were no tea leaves at home. He remembered that he owned only two pairs of trousers and one shirt and that the only pair of shoes he had was now worn out beyond repair. He remembered all these and a voice said sharply within him, Jump for the money boy, you are poor.

"I will do it," he had said.

Edward had told Mike that it would be upon him to know how he would accomplish the mission. All he would do would be to provide him with the said drug and enough money for his expenses which would not be deducted from the five thousand shillings. At that very moment Edward had fished out two thousand shillings and given to Mike. Then he had told him to come for the drug the following day in his office. Then they left the hotel, Edward driving back to his office and Mike walking back home via a middle class boutique in the city where he bought himself a new set of clothes.

In the early hours of the following day, Mike showed up at the African Development Bank offices and was let through to Edward's office. They did not talk much this time. Edward just gave him a small transparent nylon paper packet full of a white powder. Mike looked at the packet for a brief moment before putting it into his pocket. Then Edward told him that the room where he was to plant the drug was occupied by a student called Douglas Kamau, a first year anthropology student, in case he needed to know. Edward then told him that he should ring him immediately after he planted the drug to inform him that he had accomplished the mission and to tell him where exactly in the room he had planted it. He wrote for him both his office and home telephone numbers on a piece of paper.

Mike was not ignorant about the University of Nairobi. He had on several occasions visited his cousin who was a second year political science student in Hall Eight. He knew that the university had over fifteen thousand students and that no one could tell who was a student

and who was not. His cousin had told him that even the hall custodians did not know all the students as they were too many. On one occasion when he had gone to visit his cousin he had found him outside the hall waiting for a friend who had his keys. They had waited for the friend but he never showed up. His cousin had then gone to the hall's custodian's office and requested to be given a key to open the room. As he explained to Mike later, there was a master key at the custodian's office and that worked for all the halls. This, as he explained, was meant to prevent students from breaking into their rooms when they misplaced their keys.

As Mike left Edward's office, he remembered that incident and he hatched a scheme of getting the key to Douglas' room from the hall's custodian.

* * * * *

Mike had left home early that morning and went to the university. He went to Hall Nine and surveyed the situation. The custodian's office which was at the entrance of the hall was open and through its glass wall he could see a man at a desk flipping through a file. He most likely is the custodian, Mike thought. He then climbed up the flight of stairs to the first floor.

He saw Room 100 and did not need to go further. He went along the passage until he came to the room he was looking for; Room 106.

Mike knocked at the door and pushed it open. He peeped in through the semi opened door. The beam of his eyes landed on a young man of about his age holding a girl of about the same age by the shoulders, one of the hands resting on the girl's right breast as they sat on the bed. As Mike walked in, the boy relaxed his grip on the girl and both of them looked at him, surprise showing on their faces.

"Yes please, can I help you?" Douglas asked.

"Do you know a student called Julius Otwani?" Mike asked.

"Does he reside here?" Douglas asked.

"Yes, he told me he stays in this hall but I can't remember the exact room number. He mentioned something like one hundred and something," Mike said.

"Which course is he taking?" Douglas asked.

"Engineering," Mike said.

As usual that was the course that came to his mind. It was the course he had always desired to take. Indeed in his secondary school life, he had nursed dreams of one day joining the university to study engineering but luck was not on his side. He had failed to score the needed grade to join university. However, the name of his dream course remained embedded in his mind.

"That was a mistake. Engineering students don't stay in this hall. They stay in Halls Six and Seven," Douglas said.

"Thanks. I think I'll go there and try to find out," Mike said.

"They're on the opposite side of the fence," Douglas said.

"Thank you very much," Mike said as he closed the door.

His eyes had by then swept all over the room and they did not fail to notice the typewriter on the table. He must be doing typing business, Mike thought. Then he began to walk away along the corridor. He had now accomplished one goal; he knew the room's occupant and could easily monitor his movements.

Mike did not think he had acted the scene in Douglas' room in a queer manner. He thought he had behaved perfectly. However, one year later he was to be proved wrong when in his book, Douglas described him thus:

"The boy had no sense of modesty. He just knocked on the door once and pushed it open without waiting to be invited in. I was embarrassed when he found me holding Nancy by the shoulders but I did not show it. I noticed too that he looked nervous when he was asking me whether I knew a friend of his whom he called Julius Otwani. My fear that the boy had not come to my room by accident was confirmed when he said that a friend of his whom he claimed to be an engineering student had told him he resided in Hall Nine. All engineering students stayed in Halls Six and Seven and I found this strange. . ."

Mike then went to the custodian's office and presented himself as Douglas Kamau. He told the custodian that he had misplaced his key and wanted to be given the master key which was at the office. The

custodian did not ask many questions. He just opened his file and went through the names of the occupants of the hall. When he confirmed that it was actually Douglas Kamau's that was registered for room 106 he closed the file. He removed a medium size book from the cabinet, he wrote down Douglas' name and room number, and then extended the book for Mike to sign.

Mike took the book and the pen. He quickly thought about the signature he was to insert and he duly scribbled it down. Then he handed the book back to the custodian who put it back in the cabinet. The custodian pulled open one of the drawers at his desk and removed one key that was among many. He gave it to Mike. Mike took it, saw it had a small paper attached to it indicating the room number, and heard the custodian remind him to return the key soon.

* * * * *

As Mike got out of Hall Nine, he bought a newspaper from a vendor and sat on the soft grass outside Hall Eight from where he had a good view of the entrance to Hall Nine.

Mike stayed outside the hall for about half an hour before he spotted Douglas and the girl leave the hall. He rose and followed them from a distance. Soon, they disappeared along Mamlaka Road heading towards Serena Hotel. They stopped at the bus stage near the hotel.

Mike was saved from having to spend a lot of time at the bus stage for a bus soon came and Douglas and the girl got in. Mike watched as the bus drove away and he quickly began walking back, almost in a run.

Once on campus he first went to the students' centre for a hot drink. He had all the time in the world and besides, he badly needed to ease his tension. Then, after the drink, he set out to accomplish his task.

As Mike Kinga was getting into a telephone booth to inform Edward that the job was done, Douglas and Nancy were arriving at Douglas' home in Witeithie village.

Douglas' mother was excited when she saw them and she welcomed them into the house happily.

Douglas' mother was a sociable woman. She asked Nancy about her trip to America and about their studies at the university. What made her more excited was the news that her son had scooped the top prize in the National Writing Competition and that to crown it all he had written another story for the country's leading newspaper.

She did not know how to read and write but Douglas and Nancy briefed her on what he had written about. It was a feature article on Witeithie village, highlighting the suffering that the villagers endured everyday. They told her of how Douglas had made a friend called Nathaniel Bidu, a leading writer in the country. Then they explained how Douglas, after writing the story, had taken it to Nathaniel and how he had described it as an excellent piece of literature. They told her all these and she was full of joy.

Douglas gave his mother all the money he had won in the writing competition. She had wanted Douglas to keep some of the money but he insisted that she must take it all because he did not have financial problems at the university. In a week's time anyway, Douglas would be receiving a cheque from *Nation* for the feature article he had written and which had been published that day.

Douglas and Nancy spent the whole day at Witeithie. He took Nancy around the slum and, for the first time, she saw from close range life in the village. The other times she had been to Witeithie she had just stayed in Douglas' home and had not seen much. Now that she had seen the length and breadth of it, Nancy was full of sympathy for the villagers. She was angry at the government for not doing anything to improve their living conditions and was angry at the rich for not being human enough to help. Moreover, she was angry at the architects of capitalism for it had catalysed the demise of humanity in the world, with everyone fighting his way up the social ladder regardless of whether he was stepping on another's toes. Nancy cursed the world for being so unfair.

Before they left to go back to campus, Douglas' mother offered to pray. She prayed that they should be showered with blessings and that God should give them more strength to fight their battles in a world that was unfair. She prayed, too, that her son would achieve more success

so that the world would know that even a pauper's womb could bear a king.

* * * * *

That evening Douglas was in his room with two friends; Mwangi and Macharia. He was busy typing an article which he was to take to Nathaniel the following day and his two friends were reading the article on Witeithie. Then suddenly there came a knock on the door. Macharia invited the person in. As the door was pushed open, two middle-aged men walked in.

Douglas could not recall ever having seen the two men. His two friends also, from the way they looked at the men, seemed not to know their identity.

"Whose room is this?" one of the men asked.

"It's mine. Can I help you please?" Douglas said.

"We are officers from the Criminal Investigation Department," the man said and removed a card which he showed to Douglas.

He then walked nearer to the reading table from where Douglas was typing. Douglas did not even see the card with the man's passport size photograph and bold letters spelling: 'C.I.D. OFFICER'. He was too confused to see the card. All he saw were blurred pictures in front of him. Pictures of the men as they stood before him. His two friends also gazed at the two men, mouths agape and surprise showing on their faces.

"What did you say?" Douglas asked.

It was the only question that came to his mind.

"We are CID officers, young man," the man said as he returned the card to his pocket.

"What is wrong?" Douglas asked.

"Open your wardrobe," the man ordered.

Douglas gazed at him in disbelief without stirring.

"Did you hear what I said?" the officer bawled.

"Why should I open my wardrobe?" Douglas asked.

"You can answer that question better young man. You know very well what you keep in this room which shouldn't be here," the man said.

"I haven't kept anything illegal here. I only keep my things; just clothes and academic stationery," Douglas said.

"Stop wasting our time. We have better things to do. Just open the wardrobe and shut your filthy beak," the man said in a harsh voice. Douglas rose from the seat and walked to the wardrobe. There was a tense atmosphere in the room as he unlocked the padlock on the wardrobe and removed it. Then he opened the wardrobe.

The two men moved to the wardrobe and began their search. They removed all of Douglas' clothes and turned the pockets inside out. They removed the books and flipped through the pages without caring whether they got torn or not. They pulled out Douglas' rucksack and turned it upside down, feeling with their hands all the side pockets. When they found nothing they put down the clothes in a heap and threw them into the wardrobe without returning them to their hangers. They threw back the books in a haphazard manner such that some got torn. Over the heap of clothes, books and other stationery the men threw the bag and closed the wardrobe. Then they turned to Douglas who was burning with uncontrolled anger.

"Open the desk drawers young man," they said.

Douglas pulled the two drawers without uttering a word.

The men removed everything that was in the drawers, mostly spring files containing notes and newspaper cuttings. When they did not find what they were looking for in the drawers they returned the things in a disorderly manner and pushed them in.

The men now turned their attention to the bed. They removed the blankets one by one and shook them vigorously. After flapping each blanket they put it on the floor such that the sheets soon formed a pile. The men threw away the pillow on the reading table and it landed on the typewriter, nearly knocking it off. Douglas took the pillow from the typewriter and placed it on the heap of beddings on the floor, anger and hate simmering in side him.

The two men removed the mattress from the bed and shook it vigorously. Then something fell from the mattress. Douglas and his two friends gazed at the small transparent nylon packet containing a white powder.

None of them could find the appropriate words to say. They were too confused. The two men put back the mattress on the bed and one of them faced Douglas.

"What the hell is this, young man?" he asked, pointing at the packet with his long thin finger.

"I don't know," Douglas answered.

The man bent down and picked up the packet. He held it in his hand and brought it close to Douglas' eyes.

"You don't know what this is?" he asked.

"I don't know for sure," Douglas said.

"This is pure cocaine," the man said.

"What?" Douglas asked in amazement, but before he even uttered another word, the man had produced a pair of handcuffs from his coat pocket.

"You're under arrest," he said as he gripped Douglas' hands together and handcuffed them.

"What the hell is happening gentlemen?" Mwangi finally asked.

"Shut up young man if you don't want to accompany him," the second officer shouted.

"Where are you taking me?" Douglas asked.

"To the Central Police Station and later to court where you'll answer charges of possessing drugs," one of the men said.

Douglas wanted to say something but he did not know what to say. He was pushed violently to the door and it was then that he turned to Mwangi and Macharia.

"Tell Nancy that I've been arrested," he said.

Then he was shoved out and the men half carried him along the passage and into the darkness.

"Let's rush to Nancy," Macharia said.

Mwangi nodded and looked at the reading table. He walked to the table, took Douglas' keys which were next to the typewriter and quickly, they left the room. Macharia locked the door and they walked along the corridor, down the stairs and through the dark compound. They were just in time to see the two men push Douglas into a car and drive away fast.

Nancy was badly shaken when she received the news. Mwangi and Macharia found her when she was about to retire to bed, having just returned from the common room where she had been watching the nine o'clock on news television.

Naturally, Nancy could not believe that Douglas had been arrested for possessing cocaine. She knew Douglas too well to know that he did not use or peddle drugs. He had never even smoked a cigarette let alone touched hard drugs.

Nancy did not however have time for speculations. What was happening was too shocking. All she did was to spring to action fast and together with Macharia and Mwangi, they left they hall. They immediately took a taxi and headed for the Central Police Station.

"What brings you here at this time of the night?" the duty officer at the reception desk asked as Nancy and her two companions walked in. He was a well built man whose body radiated more violence than the words he had spoken. Nancy hated him at first sight.

"We want to see a friend who has just been brought here," Nancy said.

The policeman shot a fierce look at her.

"I hope you're not calling one of the street thugs brought here a friend," the policeman said.

"He's not a thug. He is just an innocent student," Nancy pleaded. The officer's eyes remained glued on her face.

"A student you say?" he bawled.

"Yes. He was brought here a few minutes ago."

"Are you talking about that cocaine addict from the university?"

"He's not a cocaine addict. He has never taken drugs," Nancy said. The officer just gazed at her.

"He calls himself Douglas Kamau, I suppose," he asked.

"Yes, that is him."

"He's yet to prove himself innocent in a court of law."

"What crime has Douglas committed?" Nancy asked.

"Possessing 500 grammes of cocaine in his university room. He has to convince a judge of his innocence otherwise, or he will spend a maximum of seven years in jail," the officer said.

"Cocaine!" Nancy exclaimed. "That is absurd! Douglas has never taken any drug or kept any in his room."

"Who made you a judge young girl? Is he your boyfriend?" the officer asked in jest.

Nancy started crying.

"Douglas can't do that. He has been framed," she sobbed.

"Go back and dry your tears. We have more than our fair share of trouble from the university."

There was a note of finality in the officer's voice.

"But I want to see Douglas," Nancy pleaded.

"Who told you he has come to a five star hotel and could host guests at will. Your boyfriend is safe inside a cell and that is where he should stay," the officer said rudely.

"You're torturing him for nothing. He is innocent," Nancy said.

"No one is torturing your boyfriend. He is only having his filthy manhood crushed so as to ease his tension. Then he'll speak sense when he appears in court," the officer said.

"We won't see Douglas you mean?" Nancy asked.

"Well, I'm being too good to you girl. I should have ordered that you be locked in a cell for behaving in a manner likely to cause a breach of peace. Get out of my sight," the officer said.

Nancy did not move. The officer shifted his attention from the three and began to flip through a file at his desk. Then after a few seconds he raised his head and faced Nancy.

"You're still here?" he asked and before she could answer, a heavy slap landed on her right cheek.

Pain swept through her whole body and for a brief moment she was dazed. When she faced the officer, her hand massaging her cheek.

"Get lost!" he said.

Nancy could not wait for another slap. She turned and followed Mwangi and Macharia who had begun to move out.

By the time the three were walking past the gate and hailing a taxi; Nancy was weeping uncontrollably. The taxi took them back to campus and Mwangi and Macharia tried their best to console her and assure her that all would be well.

Back at the university, Nancy rushed to the telephone booth outside the Women's Hall. As a stream of tears flowed down her cheeks, she inserted a shilling in the slot and took the mouthpiece. Quickly she changed the six digit number of their Lavington landline at their home. Nancy could hear the phone ringing at the other end but no one was picking it up. She cut the line and banged the numbers again.

She heard the ringing, held the receiver tightly, and cursed whoever was at home for not picking up the telephone. Then, in the midst of her confusion, she heard a click as the phone was picked and her shilling was swallowed into the slot.

"Yes please," a sleepy voice said.

Nancy knew immediately that it was her father. She could tell also that he was in bed.

"It's Nancy, dad," she said.

"What is the problem?" he asked

"Douglas has been arrested."

"Douglas? Arrested?" Edward asked.

Nancy could have sworn that there was indifference in his voice. She could discern some coldness. Perhaps, it was because he was sleepy and had not yet digested what she had said, she thought.

"He has been arrested and I was prevented from seeing him at the police station," she continued.

"Why was he arrested?" Edward asked.

"They are saying that they found cocaine in his room," she said.

"So that boyfriend of yours takes drugs?" Edward asked.

The question struck her like lightning.

"What dad? Why do you say such a thing? Douglas has never smoked even a cigarette," Nancy said with agitation.

"I was just asking. You know it's not common for police to say they found drugs in your room when there weren't any. I guess they must be having an exhibit to produce in court," Edward said.

"What do we do now dad?" Nancy asked hysterically.

"About what?" her father asked.

The question deeply stung her heart.

"About Douglas. He should be released dad. He is innocent!"

"The court is yet to prove that Nancy," he said.

"You're suggesting that Douglas actually had the cocaine in his room father?"

"Not exactly. I'm only saying that no one knows the truth. It's the court that will say if he's innocent or guilty."

"Do something to secure his release please. Please bail him out. They are torturing him in the cell. The duty officer at the police station even slapped me on the face."

"Don't worry about it, Nancy. Everything will be okay."

"Will you pay the bond and hire a lawyer for him?" Nancy asked.

"I'll look into that. Have a good night," Edward said.

"But dad..." Nancy realised that she was talking to a dead line.

Her father had long banged the receiver.

Nancy replaced her receiver and pushed the booth's door open. She removed her handkerchief and wiped the tears that filled her face. Her eyes were now red and aching. She stood outside for a moment letting the night breeze soothe her body almost to numbness.

Standing there, she wondered what to do. Douglas was precious and she dreaded the thought that kept creeping on her mind. The thought of Douglas being subjected to torture for a crime she knew he did not commit.

Nancy's mind came to present focus when somebody touched her right hand.

"Nancy, is it you?"

She turned to see who it was and she saw it was a friend.

"What is wrong Nancy?"

"Oh, nothing Jane," she said vainly trying to conceal the torment within her.

"There must be something very wrong, Nancy. Why are you standing here at this time of the night? And you look sad. Just tell me the problem. I'll try to help."

"Nothing much Jane. I was just letting off steam in the cool night," Nancy said as she began walking away.

Jane then walked in the opposite direction.

When Nancy reached her room and got into bed, she tried to catch some sleep but all was in vain. She remained awake with tears soaking her pillow and her eyes aching even more. Sad thoughts troubled her

mind which kept on racing to distant places without landing on any one episode in particular. In the course of her thoughts, Nancy reflected on her father's attitude during the telephone conversation. She thought for a long time without comprehending anything but when the realisation hit her, it was with such a force that it overwhelmed her and made her curse the day she was born. She remembered with clear vividness what had transpired during the visit to America. She remembered the bitter truth that her father had been for the idea that she succumbs to Mathews' advances. Nancy cried even more.

The night was a terrifying one for her. She never got real sleep and would wake up badly shaken by continuous nightmares. At the end of it all she lost sleep altogether and at around four o'clock just lay on the bed facing the ceiling. Her head ached terribly and her eyes hurt. She had a feeling akin to sickness that stemmed from her depressed mind.

Nancy got out of bed early in the morning and took a hot shower. She did not go for breakfast. She had no appetite for anything. She just went to the canteen and bought painkillers which she swallowed. Then she hailed a taxi and went to the Central Police Station.

The duty officer at the reception desk was not the one who had slapped her the previous night. He had been replaced by a female officer. Nancy's confidence increased when she noticed the change. As her heart pounded like a million mortars she prayed that she would be allowed to see Douglas.

"Can I help you?" the officer asked as Nancy stood at her desk.

Her voice was polite and this gave Nancy more hope.

"Yes madam," Nancy said, "I'd like to see a friend who was brought here last night."

"Why was he brought here?" the officer asked.

"They said they found cocaine in his room," Nancy said.

"So you're talking of that student from the university?" the officer asked, her memory seemingly refreshed.

"Yes, his name is Douglas Kamau," Nancy said. "The whole thing is a frame up. I know him more than anybody else."

"So you want to see him?"

"Yes madam."

"He's due to appear in court today at around nine. You therefore can't be allowed to see him now," the officer said.

"Please, madam allow me to see him briefly," Nancy pleaded.

"You know, young girl, it's against the rules but of course if you have something small..." the officer went on.

Nancy heard the words and understood immediately that she wanted a bribe. She quickly dug into one of her pockets and fished out a few notes. She did not even care to know what amount it was. She just handed it over to her. The officer saw that it was Ksh 100 and put the money into her pocket then she faced Nancy.

"Hold on for a minute, girl. I've to talk to someone first."

The officer then rose from her seat and walked down a corridor. She disappeared into an inner office. Nancy waited impatiently until she came back ten minutes later, accompanied by a male officer.

"This is the girl who wants to see the boy," the female officer told to the man who turned to Nancy.

"You want to see the cocaine addict?" he asked.

The words stung Nancy with an overwhelming force. She hated him instantly. How could he call Douglas a cocaine addict? The world must be very unfair.

Aloud she said, "Yes sir."

"Follow me," the officer said and moved out of the reception desk to the compound outside.

Nancy followed him. They walked towards the cells which were a few metres from the office block and the officer stopped at one of them. As he unlocked the door, Nancy's heart beat faster and faster.

Douglas lay crouched at a corner of the wet stinking floor. His head rested on his knees and he seemed to be oblivious of what was happening. He did not have shoes on and his shirt and trousers, which had been clean the day before, were now crumpled and dirty. His figure cut the shape of misery.

Nancy burst into a torrent of tears when she saw him. His suffering touched her greatly and she could not hold back the tears. They were tears of nothing but love for her boyfriend, who she could have sworn was totally innocent. It was her weeping that brought Douglas' attention

to the present. He raised his head slowly and looked at the door. When he saw Nancy, he rose and met her as she staggered towards him. They embraced passionately and tears streamed from both their eyes. The policeman, smiling wryly, closed the door.

"What happened Douglas?" Nancy asked.

"They planted drugs in my room. They put cocaine in my mattress and arrested me," he said.

"Who planted the drugs?" Nancy asked.

"I don't know. Two men just came and started ransacking my room, disarranging my clothes and tearing my books. Then they found cocaine in the mattress."

"Have they tortured you?" she asked.

"My whole body is in a mess. I've been beaten throughout the night. They have even condemned me as a drug addict," he said.

"I'm sorry for the torture Douglas. God will help us overcome this. No one can shape another's destiny," Nancy said.

"Who do you think planted the cocaine?" Douglas asked.

His eyes were glued on Nancy's face. Nancy looked down and her mind began to reflect on realities she would have wished were not true.

When she turned to face Douglas, she said faintly. "My father did it."

There was a moment of silence in which the two of them stared into each other's eyes. Then Douglas spoke.

"I've been thinking about it too," he said.

"I rang dad last night when they denied me permission to see you here and I asked him to pay your bond and hire a lawyer but I could sense he wasn't for it. He seemed to think that you are guilty, Douglas," Nancy said.

"I feel that I should die, Nancy. I don't deserve to be alive. I don't deserve this torture, I really don't."

"Don't surrender to despair," Nancy said. "We shall overcome."

"They're about to take me to court but I'll not defend myself. I will tell the judge to do whatever he wants. I can't take part in an unjust trial," he said.

"I feel betrayed by dad, Douglas. I really feel betrayed. I can't understand why he should do this," Nancy said.

"He wants you to be Mathews' girlfriend. You know very well that I'm the stumbling block and I must be eliminated at all costs," Douglas said.

"I swear I'll never give in to that evil scheme," Nancy said with bitterness. "I would rather die than demean my womanhood."

"Goodbye for seven years. I'll really miss you, Nancy," Douglas said like one in a dream.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"They're going to jail me for seven years and I'll sincerely miss you. They have all the evidence they need to jail me. They'll produce the cocaine in court and the case won't take more than five minutes. I won't plead Nancy. I'll just tell the judge that the cocaine was planted in my room and that he should do whatever he deems fit with me," Douglas said.

"You're not going to be jailed Douglas. I'm sure of that. If you go to jail then I'll die. I'll tell my father that I'll kill myself if you are not released by noon today. He should use the same effect he used to ensure your release," Nancy said.

"Are you sure he'll order that I be released?" Douglas queried.

"I don't care whether he does it or not but I'll tell him that and I'll actually kill myself if you're not released," Nancy said.

Douglas was about to say something when the cell door opened and the policeman peeped in.

"That is enough, young girl. This is not a hotel room," the officer shouted.

Nancy turned to face him, her face radiating hate and anger.

"I'm getting out sir," she said.

"Get out fast girl. I don't have all the time in the world to wait for you to say your sweet nothings to a cocaine addict."

Nancy felt rage building up in her. She wished she were dead.

She turned to Douglas as the policeman continued to gaze at her and said, "Don't worry Douglas, all will be well."

Then she walked to the door and got out. As she walked down the corridor, she turned and saw the policeman locking the cell door. More tears began to well in her eyes.

* * * * *

Professor Edward Waihenya had just settled on his velvet seat in his office when the telephone rang. He grabbed the receiver and said, "Morning, can I help you?"

"I don't want any help from you dad. You brought me into this world and you have an obligation to buy my coffin," Nancy said from the other end.

The words hit Edward sharply and confusion set in.

"What do you mean Nancy?" he asked.

"I'm calling to inform you that if Douglas is not released by noon, I'll be dead a minute after noon," Nancy said.

"What do you mean?" he shouted.

"I mean that I will kill myself by noon today if you will not have ordered the release of Douglas just as you ordered his arrest yesterday," Nancy said.

Edward wanted to scold her but the line went dead. He was dazed and confused that for several minutes he just gazed at the ceiling without even blinking. He regained composure gradually and reflected on what had just happened. It was Nancy he had been speaking to. She had said she would kill herself if Douglas was not released by noon. She had said he should order his release just as he had ordered his arrest. The question continued ringing in his mind. What he admitted to himself was that Nancy was no fool. She was clever and could put two and two together.

Seconds later, Edward grabbed the receiver and dialled a six digit number. As the telephone at the other end rang in his ear, his heart beat faster and faster. Nancy was his only daughter he could not afford to lose her! He had lived with her for too long to know that she was dead serious. He could tell now from the words she had spoken and the tone in which she had spoken them that she would not hesitate to make good her threat.

"Yes please, can I help?" a voice asked at the other end.

"Is that the police headquarters?" Edward asked.

"Yes, what can I do for you?" the voice asked.

"I urgently want to talk to the police boss," Edward said.

"The police commissioner?" the voice asked.

"Yes. Urgently," Edward said.

"Who are you?" the voice asked.

"Tell him it's Professor Edward Waihenya and make it quick please," Edward said.

"Oh it is you Professor?" the voice asked.

"Yes and I badly want to talk to the commissioner."

"Hold on a minute, please," the voice said.

A few minutes later the commissioner's voice came over the line.

"Good morning Professor," he greeted.

"Good morning Mr Kanda," Edward said.

"What is the problem this time? We got your boy and he'll appear in court today at nine. I can assure you that he won't escape seven years in jail," Kanda said.

"It's in connection with that that I'm ringing. Release him immediately without delay please," Edward said.

"Why? What has happened Professor?" Kanda asked surprised.

"Nancy has said that she'll commit suicide if the boy isn't released by noon. That daughter of mine is crazy, Mr Kanda. She'll do it and I know it," Edward said.

"Has she told you that?" Kanda asked.

"Yes and she is serious. Bloody serious," Edward said.

"They must be head over heels in love. Theirs must be true love, I guess."

"You just release the boy but I can assure you that he won't escape my scheme. I'll use another method which Nancy will never find out, let alone get a way of sabotaging," Edward said.

"I'll release the boy if that is what you want Professor," Kanda said.

"Do it and order the destruction of all the records about him. A scandal is the last thing I'll tolerate," Edward said.

"Okay, Professor, I'll do it immediately," Kanda said and hang up.

Edward replaced the receiver and heaved a heavy sigh of relief.

Chapter Ten

Nancy was in her room, lying face downwards on her bed when there came a knock on the door. She did not get up. Neither did she turn her head to look at the door. It was not locked and whoever was knocking could just get in. Sure enough, the door was pushed open after the third knock.

"Nancy," a voice called out and Nancy did not need to hear it twice to know whose it was.

Quick as lightning, she turned her head and saw him.

"Douglas!" she exclaimed in excitement.

She rose from the bed and embraced him. They remained thus, kissing passionately for sometime before breaking loose. Then they faced each other, looked at each other's eyes, passionate doses of love flowed through them.

"They have released you!" Nancy exclaimed.

"I don't know what has made them do it. They were determined to see me imprisoned," Douglas said.

"My dad indeed was determined to do so but I rang him this morning and told him that I'd kill myself by noon if he didn't order your release," Nancy said.

"Your dad?" Douglas asked.

"Of course. I rang him when I left the police station," Nancy said.

"I feel tired all over. I've been subjected to undue torture at the police station," Douglas said.

"Take it easy. By the way, how did they manage to plant the cocaine in your room?"

"It still puzzles me," Douglas said.

"I wish I was never born, Douglas," Nancy said. "I wouldn't be seeing such injustice now. I feel guilty for your suffering. My father is torturing you just because you're my friend. I feel that I'm the cause of the whole problem."

"I am the cause and not you Nancy. I'm more guilty than you. It's because of me that you're being subjected to unnecessary psychological torture."

"We're both guilty at the surface of it but we're both innocent," Nancy said. "We're just unfortunate victims of society's madness. The whole plot is revolving around greed, selfishness and inhumanity. My father wants me to be Mathews' girlfriend so that he can gain materially and get more prestige. We're really victims of fate, Douglas."

"My mother thinks that I'm alright on campus. She should know what is happening," Douglas said.

"We're going to tell her everything that has happened," Nancy said.

"And Nathaniel, Nancy," Douglas said. "I think we should first arrange to see him before heading home. Is that okay?"

"It's okay. Later we shall talk to my parents and solve the problem. Something really has to be done. We should convince dad to stop behaving the way he is," Nancy said.

"I look like a backstreet thug, Nancy. I'm dirty from head to toe and I badly need a shower before we get going," Douglas said.

"They really manhandled you, didn't they? I wish I had a gun. I would have shot down all the officers in that police station," Nancy said. "You know, I came to the police station yesterday with Mwangi and Macharia but they couldn't let us through. The duty officer even slapped me. When I came this morning, I had to bribe the officer to be let in."

"We're in a crazy world, Nancy. I wish I wasn't born," Douglas said. "Let's go to my room so that I can take a shower and then we shall go to see Nathaniel."

"I also want to see where exactly they planted the drug," Nancy said.

"Oh, my key," Douglas exclaimed. "I think I left them in the room. Did Mwangi and Macharia bring them to you?"

"No, they didn't give them to me. But they said they had locked the room."

"Anyway, let's go. We shall take the master key at the custodian's office."

At the office, Douglas was surprised that the previous day somebody had signed out the master key in his name and returned it the same day. The signature scribbled down was nothing close to his.

"Who took this key yesterday?" he asked, pointing at the fake signature.

"I wasn't on duty yesterday," the custodian said. "But do you mean you aren't the one who signed for it?"

"I didn't signed for it. The last time I took it was a month ago," Douglas said.

"Is this not your signature?" the custodian asked.

"You can check it against my sample signature from your files," Douglas said.

The custodian pulled out a desk drawer and removed a file which contained all the sample signatures of all the students in the hall. He checked against room 106 and compared the signature with that on the book. He did not need to look at the two signatures twice to know that they were totally different. He turned to face Douglas as he scratched his bearded chin.

"Yes, I can see it is a fake signature."

"Which means that somebody took the key, went to my room, did whatever he wanted to do in my absence and then returned the key," Douglas said.

"It appears so but as I'm telling you I wasn't on duty yesterday. However, I'll talk to the warden and launch investigations."

Douglas found no need to say more. If he was to complain, he would complain for a million years but nothing would come of it. Whoever had signed out the key was obviously the one who had planted the drug. Douglas signed out the key and left the office.

"Somebody signed out this key yesterday under my name and scribbled a fake signature," he told Nancy who had been waiting outside.

"Why should they let somebody take a key in your name?" Nancy asked.

They began to climb the stairs.

"The university should sack its entire staff and recruit new people to be rid of such inefficiency," Douglas complained.

"Whoever signed out the key must be the one who planted the cocaine. Who can it be?" Nancy asked.

Douglas was silent for a few minutes deeply engrossed in thought.

"Do you remember that boy who came to my room yesterday morning, asking whether I knew an engineering student called Julius Otwani?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. He must be the one who planted the drug," Nancy said.
"I can bet he is. He must have planted it when we left for Witeithie," Douglas noted.

"I wish he could die," Nancy cursed.

They reached Douglas' room and he unlocked the door, pushed it open and they walked in.

The room was just as Douglas had left it. The blankets and bedsheets were still in a heap on the floor and the typewriter was on the table with the half-typed article still in it. The wardrobe was closed but not locked.

"This is the mess they made of my room," Douglas said as he locked the door behind him.

"Where was the cocaine hidden?" Nancy asked.

"Here in this hole," Douglas said as he pointed at a spot in the mattress.

"Go ahead and take a shower. I'll arrange the room," Nancy said.

"You can also finish typing that article so that we can take it to Nathaniel, please," Douglas said.

"I'll do that," she said.

Douglas gathered his bathing paraphernalia and left for the bathroom.

Nancy began to arrange the room and by the time Douglas came back the room was clean and well arranged. Nancy was then busy typing the article.

Thirty minutes later the two left the room and walked to Nation House.

Nathaniel was shocked when he learned that Douglas had spent the previous night in a police cell. He was even more puzzled when Douglas and Nancy told him exactly what was going on. They told him everything, each from their respective backgrounds to Nancy's visit to America and the admiration by Roger Mathews. Nathaniel for a moment could not believe what he had heard.

Nancy and Douglas sought his advice on how they should handle the situation. Nathaniel told them that they should not end their friendship just because of the American tycoon and her father, whom he said was solely driven by material interest. He advised them to approach

Nancy's father and bravely try to convince him to stop his evil plans. According to Nathaniel, that was the only solution to the problem.

* * * * *

From Nation House, Douglas and Nancy went to Witeithie. Douglas' mother broke down when she learned of her son's predicament. She then told them to pray hard so that God would help them overcome their tribulations. Later, she called Douglas alone in her bedroom and amid tears told him that he should forget Nancy.

"My son," she said as she wept. "I've brought you up with difficulty. Now they want to destroy you. We're poor my son. Please stop locking horns with such people. They'll destroy you my son. You're my only hope. It's in you that I see hope for a change in our living conditions. You can avoid destruction. Please, my son, don't allow them to destroy you. These rich people have destroyed our aspirations. They have condemned us to a dog's life in Witeithie as they sleep on gold in their big mansions. Please, Douglas, don't allow them to kill your future. Live long to prove to them that a poor man is also a human being."

The words struck Douglas with the forcefully as they were uttered. They were words that stemmed from the very depth of his mother's heart. They were bitter words of a mother's passionate love for her son, words full of hate for those who were out to destroy him; to destroy the only son she had so carefully nurtured for nineteen years. They were the words of a mother who was weary of economic deprivation and was just beginning to see a ray of hope in a dark tunnel; a ray which was now being sniffed out. Her advice was forthright and genuine.

Douglas understood her torment. He understood her concern for him but he did not understand why he should forget Nancy. How could he? How could he forget somebody who had been so good and true to him? This was what he did not understand and he did not know what to tell his mother. But what was deep within him was the knowledge that only death would make them part. He could not tell his mother this as it would only make her unhappy. He did not want that.

"Will you do that my son?" she said as she used her headscarf to wipe tears from her eyes.

"What?" Douglas asked, absent mindedly.

"Forget Nancy," his mother said.

Douglas did not speak. He just kept staring at his mother. They looked at each other straight in the eyes. Douglas saw the torment in her eyes and the deep love for him that she radiated. Without realising it, tears began to form in his eyes. They were neither tears of pain, nor of mourning of his uncertain future. They were tears of sadness for the uncertainty of his mother's hope. His mother saw a hope in him that was now being destroyed. This broke her heart in the process. It was for his mother's suffering that he was crying.

"Will you forget her my son?" she asked again.

Douglas heard the words hit hard against his eardrum like a million gunshots all at once. The words moved from his eardrum and diffused to his inner soul with such vigour that their echoes vibrated within him.

As he began to open his mouth to utter something, a violent stream of tears gushed from his eyes and his lips remained shut as he sobbed uncontrollably.

"Stop crying my son. Please stop it," his mother said.

Douglas removed his handkerchief and wiped his eyes. Then he walked out of the bedroom and joined Nancy at the table room.

A few minutes later, he and Nancy bid his mother goodbye and they left Witeithie to go back to campus.

"She has told me to forget you Nancy," Douglas said when they were back in his campus room.

"Who?" Nancy asked with an expressionless face.

"My mother. She told me that when she called me to the bedroom," Douglas said.

Nancy looked at him straight in the eyes.

"Why?" she asked faintly.

"So that I can stay out of trouble," Douglas said.

They looked at each other for a while without saying anything. It was only their eyes that spoke. Then Nancy broke the silence.

"And what did you tell her?" she asked in an emotive voice.

"I didn't tell her anything, Nancy. But I'll die before I disown you. I'd rather die than forget you," Douglas said equally emotional. Nancy embraced him and they kissed lovingly.

"I'll love you till death, Douglas. I'll never stop loving you," Nancy said in an outpouring of emotions.

"No one will separate us, dear. Nothing ever will," Douglas said as they relaxed their grip on each other.

They were silent for a long time. Douglas knew that Nancy was in another world. Her mind was far away in the wilderness. When Nancy faced him and confided her reflections. Douglas was caught off guard by what she said.

"Let's commit suicide, dear," she said.

"Commit suicide?" Douglas asked, surprised.

"Yes. Life has no meaning. It's better to die than to go through this suffering. This is not the type of life a human being should live. We really don't deserve all this."

Douglas held her hand against his and could feel the hurt in her.

"Don't give up Nancy. Don't surrender to despair. This is just a passing cloud. It's one of the challenges which we must face in life. We need to live, Nancy. We really need to live to prove our enemy wrong. We need to live to show the world that we can subdue injustice. Let's not allow them to break our hearts. Let them try to kill us physically but we remain strong in the soul."

Nancy began to cry again. Tears flowed down her cheeks and she rubbed them against Douglas' arm.

"Are you sure we shall overcome?" she asked

"Yes Nancy. We'll surely overcome; God will help us," he said confidently.

Mwangi and Macharia arrived when Nancy had regained composure. They were excited to see Douglas.

* * * * *

That night, Douglas retired to bed fairly early. The stress of the previous day made him fall fast asleep. He was however awakened in middle of the night by what he thought was the smell of petrol. It was so strong that it penetrated into the blankets and choked him. Perhaps he could have dismissed the smell as a trick of his mind but he heard some cracking at the window. He was now alert.

As Douglas pushed off the blankets to uncover his head, he saw a flash and a lit match stick come flying into the room through the window. A huge flame then erupted in the room and it engulfed him.

Screaming in anguish, Douglas jumped out of bed and threw away the blankets which were now beginning to catch fire. He jumped in one stride to the door for he could see clearly. The flames were consuming the wardrobe, blankets, books and the table. Quickly, he turned the key at the door and unlocked it. Then he pushed it open and jumped out. His legs were wet with petrol which flooded the room.

Douglas' screams brought students scurrying out of their rooms. The night guards rushed to the hall and clambered up the stairs. Within a short time a lot of people had milled outside Douglas' room and were busy emptying the fire extinguishers which lay at strategic points in the building. Meanwhile, Douglas was given clothes to wear by a friend whose room was next to his.

Many students woke up in the confused frenzy as people struggled to put out the fire. Before long word had gone round that a fire had erupted in Hall Nine and most people including the female students, rushed to the scene.

Nancy was badly shaken when she learned that it was Douglas' room. She had rushed out of her hall together with six friends. Nancy had not told them anything but a strong fear arrested her. She feared that Douglas may be in danger. When they came to Hall Nine and someone told them that the fire was in room 106, she was overcome by shock and became hysterical. She started screaming and calling out Douglas' name as she ran up the stairs frantically.

Douglas was told by a friend that Nancy was looking for him. He detached himself from the group of students outside his room. He walked quickly down the stairs and met her halfway.

"Nancy!" he called out.

"Douglas!" she exclaimed when she heard his voice.

She saw him and ran straight to him. Douglas held her hand and rested his chin on her shoulders.

He kissed her gently on the lips and whispered, "I'm alright Nancy. The will of God is greater than the power of men."

"Are you hurt?" she asked, tears streaming out of her eyes.

"I'm as fit as a fiddle. However, everything that I own except the typewriter is now a heap of ash," he said.

"What happened?" she asked.

"Somebody tried to kill me," she replied.

"What exactly happened?"

"I was awakened by the strong smell of petrol. Then I heard some cracking the window. When I uncovered my head I saw a lit match fly into the room and instantly a fire erupted. I jumped out of bed and I was lucky enough to open the door and escape. I could have been dead by now," Douglas narrated.

"Who could have done that Douglas?" Nancy asked.

"Who do you think it was?" he countered.

Nancy looked at him, the strong bulb on the corridor's ceiling magnifying the mist in her eyes. She was deep in thought.

"My father probably," she said.

"What should we do now?" Douglas asked.

Just then the crowd of students who had been fighting the fire shouted excitedly. A student exclaimed that the fire had been extinguished.

"Let's go to the scene," Douglas said.

They walked up the stairs to his room, Douglas holding her hand tightly.

The door to the room was no more. It had been completely burned down and people were gazing at the wanton destruction. Everything had been razed to the ground and it was only the determined fight by the students that had prevented the fire from spreading to other rooms.

Douglas was summoned to the security office where he wrote a statement after a rigorous interrogation by the Security Officer. He was soon joined by the Vice Chancellor who had been summoned by telephone.

Douglas recounted exactly what had happened. He told everything he knew except the one thing that he could not say. He could not disclose who it was that wanted him dead. He could not say that a powerful man in Kenya wanted him dead and that he was the one responsible for the fire. Douglas was thoroughly questioned for about an hour. The Vice Chancellor and the Chief Security Officer promised to conduct a thorough investigation into the case.

When he left the security office, Douglas went with Nancy to her room. She prepared coffee and they drank sitting on her bed.

"I'm sorry Nancy but now it's inevitable that I do something to save my life," Douglas said as he thought seriously.

"What do you have in mind?" she asked.

"It'll be a great blow to me Nancy, but I think I have to do it. I really must sacrifice. I must live to fulfill my mother's dream," he said.

"What do you intend to do?" she asked anxiously.

"I'll escape to another country. I've to forget that I was ever a student at this university and start life anew," Douglas said.

"Are you excluding me from the plan?" she asked, more like a statement.

"Are you prepared to suffer for my sins?" Douglas asked.

"Your problem is my problem Douglas. I'll suffer with you. I told you that only death will make me leave you," Nancy said.

"Are you sure that it is right for you to suffer for my sake. Don't you think you should finish your education?"

"Please, Douglas, you're tormenting my soul. I love you dearly and we're one, both in sorrow and happiness. I'll die with you dear. Education doesn't matter as much as you do," she said.

"So you'll escape with me?"

"Why not?"

"We shall leave very early in the morning tomorrow. Your father is really determined to send me to the grave."

"I feel guilty about the whole problem," Nancy said.

"Why?"

"I'm the one who is causing all this to happen.

"You shouldn't feel guilty. No one among us is guilty. The ones who are guilty group are your father and the American tycoon."

"My father is being so unfair. I wish he had a better sense of logic."

"Let's forget about him and set our immediate plan," Nancy said.

"Where shall we go?"

"Help me make a decision. I had thought of Tanzania," Douglas offered.

"That isn't escape. Tanzania is just a stone's throw away. My father will get us quickly," Nancy said.

"Then where do you suggest we go?"

"Nowhere in particular but somewhere out of Africa. Possibly to Europe. Somewhere we can be safe," Nancy said.

"But I don't have a passport Nancy. That is why I had thought of Tanzania because it will just involve crossing the border on foot. And besides, we don't have the money to go to Europe. All my money was burnt together with my bank book," Douglas said.

"That is no problem. All we need to do is to change our time of departure. We can't leave in the morning. We need to have money. I'll withdraw all the money in my bank account," Nancy said. "My father deposited close to fifty thousand shillings in my account last month and I haven't withdrawn a cent."

"That is a good sum but what about my passport?"

"We don't need a passport as a necessity to go to Europe. We could make plans and stow away in a ship," Nancy said.

"I read something like that in a novel," Douglas said. "But such a plan needs a lot of time to implement."

"Have you forgotten that our country is decaying from corruption? Are you forgetting that I used the power of money to make sure that I saw you in your cell at the police station?" Nancy asked.

"What are you getting at?" Douglas asked, as he sipped his coffee which was now cold.

"That with money, we can easily get into a ship destined for Europe."

"It's a bright idea but let's keep it to ourselves. Not even our best friends should know," Douglas said.

"The bank starts operating at nine in the morning," Nancy said. "That means that if I'm at the doorstep by 8.30am I can be the first customer to be served."

"Which means we can catch a bus to Mombasa at 10.00am?" Douglas asked.

"Yes we should have prepared our luggage and be at the bank on time."

"It'll mostly be your luggage. I now only own a typewriter. Thank God that you had borrowed it to type that essay."

After they finished their coffee they packed all the luggage that Nancy was to carry for the journey into small suitcases and then retired to bed late at night.

That was to be their last night at the university.

They woke up at seven and took a hot shower. Then they carried Nancy's luggage and the portable typewriter and left the room. Soon they were out of the hall and off the campus. They hailed a taxi and were taken to the city centre. After a few minutes they were at Continental Bank. By then it was just a few minutes past 8.30am.

When the bank's door was opened at exactly nine, Nancy and Douglas walked in briskly. Nancy took a sheet of paper from one of the counters and filled in the amount she wanted to withdraw. She would withdraw over fifty one thousand shillings. Then they walked to the paying counter and presented the paper to the cashier, together with her account book and national identity card.

"You want to withdraw all your money?" the cashier asked as she looked at the sheet of paper and then in her account book.

"Yes madam. An emergency has just occurred," Nancy answered. She knew that there would be no complications in getting the money because the amount was far below the a hundred thousand shillings which required one to give the bank a seven day's notice. The cashier pressed several buttons on the computer and the information that came on the screen was that the account was alright. It had enough money for the withdrawal.

"You will need to wait a few minutes please," the cashier said.

Then she pressed several buttons on the computer.

Nancy waited fifteen minutes after which a man emerged from an inner office and placed a heap of money on the cashier's counter. The cashier counted the money then pushed it through the circular opening at the glass wall. Nancy and Douglas counted the money pile by pile until they were sure the entire amount was there. They then stuffed the money into the suitcase, wrapping it in a towel. Douglas put five thousand shillings in his pocket and Nancy put two thousand in her hand bag. This was the money they would use for their journey to Mombasa.

If they went by bus they would take a lot of time to reach Mombasa. A bus could stay at the station for over half an hour before getting

enough passengers. Nancy and Douglas took a taxi outside the bank and they began the journey immediately.

Five hours later they were in Mombasa and were welcomed by intense humidity. The first thing they did was to go to a roadside cafe and buy cold drinks. Then they walked towards Kilindini Harbour which glared at them a short distance away.

"The most crucial thing is to know the captain of the ship in which we're going to be stowaways. Then we can approach and bribe him," Douglas said as they neared the harbour.

He was sweating profusely just as Nancy was.

"How much do you think he will ask for?" Nancy enquired.

"I have no idea but we should give him as much as he reasonably asks for. That will be better than remaining in Kenya and getting killed," Douglas said.

They walked on in silence and came to the harbour. Many ships had docked while others could be seen leaving and yet others in the distant horizon as they sailed towards the harbour.

"It's a beautiful scene," Nancy commented.

"I wish we had time to walk around for a few more hours with a peace of mind," Douglas said.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you about a dream I had in America," Nancy said.

"A dream about what?" Douglas asked remembering.

"Yes, I was dreaming that I was with you here in Mombasa," she said.

"What were we doing? Escaping from your father?" he asked cheekily.

"No, but I'm beginning to think that the dream might have been a prophesy about today," Nancy said.

"What exactly was it about?" Douglas asked.

"We were collecting sea shells, you know we were actually on holiday. I was dreaming about the visit we had planned to make here next week. Now, as we collected the shells, I stepped on a sharp object and hurt my leg," Nancy said.

"And what happened?" Douglas asked.

"You came to my rescue."

"What did the dream mean?" Douglas asked.

Nancy was silent for a moment.

"I'm beginning to think it was a prophesy of this catastrophe that has befallen us," Nancy said.

"It could be," Douglas reflected.

They stood and looked all over the port. There were many ships that lay anchored at the harbour. They could make out a passenger ship among them for it was unlike the other. It had many windows and the name *MV MZIMA* was inscribed on the side.

"Let's go to the booking office and see where *MV MZIMA* is destined and what time she is setting off," Douglas said.

They walked to the booking office.

There were several people waiting to buy tickets at the counter. Nancy and Douglas stood a distance away and watched the goings on.

"We can't buy the tickets before we solve the passport problem," Nancy whispered to Douglas.

Douglas nodded. There were now only two people waiting to be served. Soon, Douglas and Nancy would have to get to the ticket officer.

"Can't we start the whole thing with this man?" Nancy asked.

"We could perhaps ask him how we can travel without a passport and give him some money to make him cooperate. He may be part and parcel of the corruption in this country," Nancy said.

"I need to have a new name. Yours sadly can't be changed as it is already written in your passport," Douglas said.

"Take Joseph Okello," Nancy suggested.

Douglas smiled.

"Okay I'm now Okello. I'll keep that in mind. The story we'll tell him will involve the loss of my passport. We will be visiting our parents who live in Europe. But we must know the destination of the ship before we say where our parents are," Douglas said.

As he finished saying this, the last person to be served at the counter left the office. Nancy and Douglas moved to the counter.

"Where to?" the ticket officer asked without turning.

He was already cutting out a ticket bearing the name *MV MZIMA*.

"Excuse me, please," Douglas said.

The ticket officer turned to face him.

"Where is *MV MZIMA* destined?"

"She is going to Dar-es-Salaam then Luanda, Libreville and all the way to Europe," the officer said politely.

"When is she leaving?" Douglas asked.

"At seven tonight," the man said.

"Can I see the charge sheet please," Douglas said.

The officer took a small booklet bearing the ship's name and gave it to him. Douglas opened the book and read the freight charges for different destinations. Then he turned to Nancy and showed her. Another person came to buy a ticket and Douglas made way for him. He and Nancy moved from the counter and went a short distance away.

"We can't go to Europe Nancy, the charges are very high and we don't have so much money."

Nancy glanced at the charges for African capitals. They were lower and they could easily afford the money plus the bribe, leaving them with something reasonable to start a new life.

"Why don't we go to South Africa? The ship will stop at Durban on her way north," Nancy said.

"The problem is that the country is still violent. We can get in trouble with the Inkatha warriors or the police," Douglas said.

"We can land at Walvis Bay and then go to Windhoek. Namibia got her independence a few years ago and we won't have problems adapting to the country's lifestyle," Douglas said.

"It's okay with me. Remember to tell the man that we're visiting our parents," Nancy said.

"I will," Douglas said as he moved to the counter.

"We have a small problem sir and we kindly ask for your help," Douglas told the ticket officer.

"What is the problem young man?" the officer asked.

"I must travel to Windhoek together with my sister to see our parents but I've lost my passport," Douglas said.

The man looked at him straight in the eyes.

"That isn't a small problem," he said.

Douglas did not say anything. He just gazed at the officer.

"So what do you want?" the man asked.

"We thought that you could kindly help us in one way or another," Douglas said.

"Now young man what help can I give you when you have lost your passport?"

"But sir nothing is really impossible, if you don't mind my saying so," Nancy said with a broad smile. "There is something that can be done, I'm sure."

"What do you suggest we do?" the officer asked with a slight smile. His attention was now on Nancy.

"Well we're ready to grease your hand to ensure that we go to Windhoek," Nancy said.

The officer smiled and looked all around, obviously to make sure no one else was hearing.

"You're the only one without a passport?" he asked and Douglas nodded.

"So what do you have in mind?" The officer asked them.

"We'll give you something small so that you can ensure we leave for Namibia," Douglas said.

"I can talk to someone but I need something 'big' due to the high risk involved," the man said.

"About how much?" Douglas said.

"About Shs 10,000 for you only. Your sister will go in the normal way because she has her travel document. That means that she will buy a ticket like other passengers."

"How much will that be?" Douglas asked.

"Two thousand shillings," the officer answered. "I hope you have the money," he added.

"Yes, we do," Nancy said.

"Please sit over there and wait for me a few minutes," the officer said as he pointed at chairs on one side of the office. Nancy and Douglas went and sat down.

After about twenty minutes the tickets officer came back and smiled at them.

"You're lucky my friends, everything has been sorted."

"Everything?" Douglas asked in excitement.

"Yes but there are some adjustments," the officer said. "You will both have to buy tickets and then we reduce my 'lunch' to Shs 6,000."
"So we will get into the ship like the other passengers?" Nancy asked.

"Yes," the officer answered. "The only difference will be that this young man won't have his passport stamped on the ship. I've talked to the immigration officer who stamps them inside the ship. He'll skip you and act as if he's stamped your passport."

"Are the passports usually stamped when the passengers are in the ship?" Douglas asked.

"Yes, it's necessary so that those who are intending to stowaway can be thrown out," the officer said.

Nancy opened the suitcase and removed a pile of bank notes. She took twenty five thousand shillings and gave them to Douglas. Douglas then gave the money to the ticket officer to cover for the two tickets and the six thousand shillings bribe. The ticket officer counted the money, stashed his loot into his pocket and put four thousand shillings in the cash box. Then he cut out two tickets filled them, and passed them to Douglas.

As the officer was giving Douglas the tickets, a young man came to the booking office. Douglas gave him way, thinking that he wanted to buy a ticket but the man did not move. The ticket officer turned to face him with a grin.

"This is the young man, Jacob," he said to the man. The man looked at Douglas and smiled.

"Don't panic when I come to stamp the passports. Just act as if nothing has happened," he said to Douglas.

"Yes sir," Douglas said.

"I can't forget his face," the man said to the ticket officer.

The latter dug into his coat pocket and counted a pile of money which he gave to the man; obviously his share of the bribe. The man then walked out of the office.

The ticket officer turned to Douglas, who was still standing at the counter.

"Is that all?" Douglas asked.

"That is all. You are now as good as gone. Just make sure you're in the ship on time and try to relax. By seven o'clock the journey should be starting."

"Thank you very much," Douglas said.

They walked out of the office. It was already noon and they had many hours to kill before boarding the ship.

They stayed at Mama Ngina Park until 6.20 p.m. when they walked back to the harbour. They went to *MV MZIMA* and boarded her. Passengers were already getting in.

At exactly 6.30 p.m. the young man who had been at the booking office began to go around the ship stamping the passengers' passports. Douglas remained calm. When the man came to him, he recognized him instantly. He acted as if he had stamped his passport and proceeded to Nancy who sat beside him. He stamped hers and continued going round the ship in rows. Douglas heaved a heavy sigh and turned to Nancy.

"I hope all this ends well," he said.

Nancy nodded.

"I hope so too," she said.

At exactly seven, the ship's giant engine roared to life and the ship left the harbour. Douglas caught his breath as she moved further and further offshore. Then she gained speed and moved quickly into the deep waters.

Douglas then nudged Nancy and exclaimed happily, "Escape!"

Chapter Eleven

When Edward learned of the disappearance of Nancy and Douglas, he was in his house with his wife Emily taking supper. He received the information from Mike Kinga who rang from Mombasa.

Edward had, after being forced to release Douglas, enlisted further the services of Kinga. He had assigned him the duty of killing Douglas by setting his university room on fire, something Kinga willingly agreed to do but the assignment, like the first one, failed.

Kinga had then gone to a phone booth on the campus and informed Edward of the development. Edward who was very angry had scolded Kinga and told him to make sure that he killed Douglas the best way possible. He promised him another twenty thousand shillings if he did the job well and fast.

Kinga, being the man he was with a history of great poverty and extreme economic deprivation, could naturally not turn down such an assignment. He jumped at the get-rich-quick plan, and set out to accomplish Edward's order.

Kinga followed Douglas' movement as the students ran helter skelter to Hall Nine to put out the fire. He had a knife in his pocket and it was with this that he wanted to stab Douglas. Of course, he would be careful to obey Edward's order that he should not touch the girl. He followed Douglas as he left the security office and walked with Nancy to her room in the Womens' Hall. Throughout this time, Kinga had not had a chance to spring into action again. The campus was teeming with students and it would have been suicidal to attempt anything. Sure, he could have killed Douglas with just one stab but he reasoned this would be worthless as he would not leave the compound alive. Thus he could only wait for the right moment.

When Douglas got into the girl's room and locked the door, Kinga knew that he stood a very slim chance of doing the job at that time. The corridors of the hall were full of students and, besides, three security officers who guarded the hall were seated at their stations near the gate. It was this that made him decide to wait until morning. He walked into a twenty four hour service bar near the entrance to the hall and swallowed beer after beer as the few remaining hours dragged on.

At exactly 6 am, Kinga left the bar and stood near the hall's entrance. He was hoping that Douglas would get out of the hall early enough to start attending to the mess that his room was. By now, Kinga was a little drunk and very sleepy. It was the first time that he had stayed awake all night.

After standing at the hall's doorway for about 20 minutes, he saw Douglas and Nancy walking along the corridor. Douglas was carrying a suitcase and Nancy a small briefcase. It actually was the portable typewriter but he had never seen one in its casing. His heart skipped a beat. Though he had been standing there waiting for Douglas, he had not expected him to come out in this manner. Worse, the guards were still at their positions and they seemed to have started looking at him suspiciously. In the corridors there were many students walking up and down, some getting into the hall and others leaving. Kinga cursed silently for he knew that there was little hope of pouncing on Douglas without inviting his own death.

Nancy and Douglas walked down the stairs and came to the hall's doorway. They seemed not to have noticed Kinga or maybe thought he was just another student. They went into the open compound.

Kinga waited a minute and followed them carefully. He was sure that once out of the campus, he would easily get the chance he needed. He however was immediately stopped in his tracks when he saw Douglas wave down a taxi. The taxi stopped and they immediately got in. Kinga was thrown into confusion and as the taxi began to speed away, he had not yet gathered his thoughts. However, he made a quick decision when he saw another taxi crawl to a halt near the gate. He had to follow them!

Kinga quickly waved down another taxi before anybody else.

"Follow that white taxi," he told the driver when he sat at the back and hurriedly closed the door.

The driver cast his eyes on the road ahead and saw the taxi in the distance.

"Where is it heading?" he asked.

"Just follow it until it stops. I'll pay you every cent for the journey. The driver nodded and engaged the gear. He drove away speedily until he closed up the gap between them and the white taxi.

When the white taxi stopped outside Continental Bank and Nancy and Douglas got out, Kinga told the driver to stop. He paid him one hundred shillings that he had asked for and quickly got out.

Kinga walked on throwing occasional glances at the two. He saw them walk to the bank's closed door and start chatting with the guard. Another barrier! Kinga cursed bitterly. He could not kill Douglas in the presence of the bank's guard.

Instead he stood outside a boutique on the opposite side of the street pretending to be window shopping. He had considered standing outside the bank when it opened but dismissed it as too risky. So he just stood watching through a one way glass window, at times turning to face the bank's entrance. Twenty or so minutes later, he saw Douglas and Nancy get out of the bank and hail a taxi. He again watched helplessly as they got in before he recovered sufficiently and began to search for one. He saw one parked a few blocks away, its driver standing by its door waiting for a passenger. Kinga quickly, ran to the taxi.

"Follow that red taxi and don't lose it," he said to the taxi driver who was surprised by his hurry.

The driver started the engine which coughed and made a funny sound and it did not start running.

"Bastard!" the driver cursed. "This car is crazy at times."

He turned the key again and this time the engine came to life. The driver brought the car quickly to the road and increased speed.

They trailed the taxi along Haile Selassie avenue and onto Mombasa Road. Here the traffic was light and the taxi ahead increased speed. Immediately, Kinga's driver began to accelerate to avoid being too far behind. The car began to make heavy bumping sounds as it moved. Some clinking could also be heard from both the engine and car's body. Kinga also did not fail to notice that whenever the driver pressed the clutch to change gear, the engine made a funny noise which indicated that its clutch plate was faulty. He hoped that the car would make it to the destination. By the time they were at Sultan Hamud, it was apparent to Kinga that Douglas and his girlfriend were headed for Mombasa. It was also obvious that it would be a miracle if the junk he was in made it to Mombasa in one piece.

Just as Kinga was contemplating on the state of the car and hoping that it somehow would take him to Mombasa, there came a loud noise from the engine as the driver pushed in the clutch pedal to change gear. The car laboured to halt.

"The clutch has burnt young man," the driver said desperately. Kinga shot him a fierce look.

"What now?" he asked.

"The car can't proceed," the driver said calmly.

"Why did not you tell me that when I was boarding?" Kinga asked.

"How was I to know that you were bringing me to this jungle and would make me drive like a safari rally driver?"

Kinga shifted his gaze from the man and cast it on the flat road ahead. He saw the red taxi moving speedily in the distance and he knew that before long it would disappear in the horizon.

"You've let those bastards get away," he shouted.

"You've caused a great loss to me boy and you don't seem to realise it," the driver complained.

Through the driver's rear mirror, Kinga saw a bus driving fast from the distance. His hopes were renewed. He quickly opened the door and was in the process of jumping out when the driver sprang on him and held him by the shirt. A murderous rage burned in his face.

"My money boy! You can easily lose your teeth if you start behaving funny," the driver said.

Kinga dug into his pocket and fished out two hundred shillings which he tossed to the driver. The driver did not take the money. He just looked at it and let it fall on the seat without relaxing his grip on the shirt.

"That isn't enough!" the driver shouted and reached for the tyre lever under the car seat.

"How much do you want?" Kinga asked, trying hard to pretend he was not afraid.

He turned to look through the car's window and saw that the bus was now much nearer.

"Give me five hundred shillings."

Kinga was not a stupid man and knew it was a waste of time to argue with a mad driver who was only too willing to bring the metallic lever

down on his face, however unreasonable the fare he was asking. So he dipped his hand into his pocket and produced another three hundred shillings, which he tossed to the driver.

The driver relaxed his grip and reached for the money. By then Kinga had jumped out of the car and onto the roadside. The bus was fifty metres behind. He hailed it to stop and stood still, hoping it would.

The bus slowed down as it neared him and it came to a halt just where he stood. He got in through the already open door and the bus began to move again.

When the bus conductor approached him for the fare, he dutifully paid him.

Kinga did not stop gazing through the windows to see whether he could spot the red taxi but he never saw it. At Konza Shopping Centre the bus stopped for twenty minutes waiting for passengers as some had alighted at Sultan Hamud. This inevitable delay made Kinga feel impatient and he had a mind to bark at the driver to drive on. But he could not do that and he just had to wait.

When the bus was about ten kilometers from Mombasa, Kinga saw through the window a red car approaching from a distance. It resembled the red taxi. When it came nearer, he looked at the number plates and confirmed that indeed it was the taxi which was now on the return trip. His mind went wild. The bastard will escape, he cursed silently from deep within him.

By the time he alighted in Mombasa, Kinga had lost all hope of ever nabbing Douglas. He went straight to a hotel and ate a heavy lunch. Later he began to stroll round the city, not exactly looking for Douglas but generally sightseeing. It was his first visit to Mombasa, a town popular for its magnificent tourist resorts. He spent most of the evening admiring the ocean and the giant vessels he had only seen in drawings and pictures. As if with no assignment at hand, he even got time to sunbathe alongside the many white tourists who had come all the way to enjoy the pleasures which he himself had failed to get due to economic deprivation.

When dusk came, Kinga booked himself in a low cost lodging room. It was here that he would spend the night pending the arrival of morning when he would start the journey back to Nairobi.

Kinga did not care much that Douglas had escaped. What he cared and worried about was the fact that he had lost twenty thousand shillings as promised by Edward on completion of the mission. Even though, he did not care much for he already had received enough to last him a few more months. He had been paid all the amount due to him from the "cocaine mission" and ten thousand shillings down payment from the fire incident.

* * * * *

Kinga waited till 8 pm when he knew he could catch Edward at home on phone. Then he went to a booth and dialed his number. It was Emily who picked the call. She told the caller to hold on and then went to get her husband, who was busy chewing a chunk of meat as he rested on a velvet sofa. Edward rose up, walked to the table, and took the receiver.

"Edward speaking," he said into the mouth piece.

"Kinga here," the voice said at the other end.

Edward's face brightened. Had the boy done the job this time? He hoped so.

"Have you done the job young man?" he asked.

"Douglas and his girlfriend have escaped," Kinga replied.

"What?" Waihenya asked in anger.

"They have disappeared."

"Stop being crazy, young man! What exactly has happened?" Edward was now furious and his face showed it. Emily watched him from a distance, wondering what was wrong.

"I tried to bump him off yesterday night but it was impossible because students were all over the place. He spent the night in his girlfriend's room and I couldn't get the chance there because security guards were at the hall's doorway..." Kinga explained.

He now knew that Edward was furious.

"So what happened?" Edward asked.

"In the morning, they left the hall and took a taxi to town. I followed them ..." Kinga paused.

"And then?"

"They went to Continental Bank in town and left a few minutes later, after taking a taxi. I couldn't kill him then because the bank's guard was just a few paces away and he was armed."

"So what happened?" Edward pressed.

"I also took a taxi and followed them up to Mombasa," Kinga said.

"Mombasa!" Edward exclaimed. "Douglas went to Mombasa with Nancy?"

"Yes, but the taxi I was travelling in was very slow and I didn't manage to trace where in town they had gone."

"So what now?" Edward asked.

"I have spent the whole day trying to trace them here in Mombasa but I haven't seen them," Kinga said.

Edward banged the receiver on the cradle and removed a handkerchief from his pocket. He wiped off the sweat that had formed in small beads on his face and walked to the drinks' cabinet. He opened it, removed a bottle of whisky, and emptied the drink into a glass. He swallowed it in one gulp. Emily just watched in disbelief.

"Stop it Edward, you'll kill yourself," she pleaded.

She then walked hurriedly towards him as he was emptying another bottle and she snatched the glass from him.

"What is the problem? It doesn't help at all to drink yourself silly. I've always told you that. Tell me, please, what the problem is."

Emily held him by the hand and led him to the sofa.

"What is it?" she asked again.

Edward looked at her, removed a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face again.

"It's Nancy. . ." he stammered.

"What about her? I heard you mention her over the phone. What has happened?" Emily asked curiously.

"She has disappeared to Mombasa with Douglas," Edward said.

"Who has told you that?" Emily asked.

"The boy I assigned the duty of eliminating Douglas."

"The boy you sent to plant drugs in his room?" she asked.

That was all she knew and to her that was what "elimination" meant. Emily was in many cases willing to support Edward in his crafty ways but she still had a conscience and it stopped at murder.

She had of course supported the idea of "eliminating" Douglas from Nancy's life to pave way for the American tycoon. However, she could not at all have agreed with the idea of killing him. That was why Edward had not let her know.

"Yes, that is the boy who has just rang me. Douglas and Nancy have gone to Mombasa," Edward said.

"To do what?" Emily asked.

"How the hell would I know?" Edward asked sharply. Emily was silent.

They were both silent for a long time before Emily said faintly, "Let's drop the whole idea about Mathews."

Edward threw her a sharp glance and began to scratch his chin. Then he tilted his glasses, fidgeted, and finally removed the glasses. Placing them on the table, he faced Emily.

"What are you talking about Emily?"

"I'm talking about forgetting the whole idea," Emily answered in a solemn voice.

"What is that supposed to mean?" he asked fiercely.

"That the idea of working for the downfall of Douglas so that Mathews can get Nancy appears unworkable. It also will be detrimental in the long run," she said undaunted.

"What did I tell you woman, when I married you?" Edward asked, anger simmering in him. "Didn't I tell you that I'll never in my life let a good chance slip through my fingers? Didn't I tell you that the sky is the limit for me? Didn't I tell you that I consider greatness a basic human right and that I'll always strive to achieve it? Didn't I tell you all these?"

"Yes, but I'm serious Edward. We should stop persecuting Nancy. You should also bear in mind that you may be inviting problems for her in future. Remember that not all that glitters is gold," Emily said.

Edward's mind could not let her words in even if she used a hammer to drum them in. He regarded them as mere trash and preferred to memorise adages like, The early bird catches the worm and make hay while the sun shines. These made sense, and it was from them that he got the drive to push harder into his ideal world, legally or otherwise.

Edward had already broached the subject of his ambition to Mathews. After the tour in America and the subsequent admiration of Nancy by the tycoon, talking with him had become a daily routine. Mathews rang him many times to discuss various issues, top of which was how he was going about "softening" Nancy. They never talked much about the processing of the loan by Romthex International. The issue was awaiting deliberations by the Board of Directors.

During one of the many conversations, Edward had boldly told Mathews of his desire to get a big job in the World Bank. He did not mince his words in confiding that he would be delighted to be a member of the bank's Board of Directors. Mathews was a realist who believed that he should not promise heaven when he could not reach it. He duly told Edward that he would try all he could to ensure that he got a job in the bank but he cautioned that he would most likely have to start off as a middle level official at the bank's regional office in Africa. With time, Mathews would manipulate "the right people" to enable him rise to the Board of Directors.

That was clear proof, Edward thought, that he was already making hay while the sun shone. He could now proudly boast that he was one of the very few people in the Third World with a direct telephone link to Mathews.

At present, the thought of doing what his wife was saying was unthinkable. It made Edward go crazy. He could not imagine losing all the favours he already had and the many others that had been promised if he played his cards right. How could he explain to Mathews any change of mind? This was the question which pricked his mind, but he needed not bother. He had promised Mathews and he had committed himself to another method whose success was almost guaranteed.

"Let me hear no more bloody nonsense from you woman!" Edward shouted at Emily.

He rose from the sofa as she watched him in silence while he walked to the telephone and lifted the receiver.

Edward pressed a five digit number and waited. When the ringing stopped, a female voice said: "Yes please, can I help you?"

"Is Julius in?" Edward asked impatiently.

"Hold on please," the voice said.

There was a soft thud as the receiver was placed down. Then a male voice said, "Julius speaking."

"Edward on the line."

"Oh, how are you Professor?" Julius asked excitedly.

"I'm fine. Could you please come over here as soon as possible," Edward said.

"What is the matter Professor? Is something wrong?" Julius asked before he realised he was talking to a dead line.

Julius Ogeto arrived at Edward's home thirty minutes later. For all that time, Edward and Emily had not uttered a single word to each other.

Julius was a private detective who was renowned for his skill. It was his services that Edward had for long utilised in the process of making good his schemes. Thus the two had gradually become close friends, which at present justified his burning thirty miles to Edward's home.

"What's up Professor?" Julius asked as he heaped himself on a sofa.

For the next minutes, Edward explained to him the matter at hand and briefed him on what he wanted him to do. He told him everything about Nancy and Douglas except that there was a scheme to make Nancy the American tycoon's wife. He also told him that the duo had last been seen in Mombasa. Drinks were served and half an hour later, Julius was driving back to his home, ready to start tracking the two students the following morning.

Chapter Twelve

M^V *MZIMA* docked at Walvis Bay three days after leaving Mombasa. As Douglas and Nancy noticed when they got out of the ship, the port was not as busy as Kilindini. The level of activity was relatively low and only a few vessels could be seen getting in and out of the harbour. This could be explained by the fact that Namibia had just gained independence and had not yet fully mobilised trade.

Douglas and Nancy had no problem going through the custom formalities. The captain of the ship, acting on instructions from the ticket officer, had ensured that Douglas was not asked for his visa when he disembarked. Only their luggage was charged customs duty and the two changed their money to the Namibian currency. Then they left the port and strolled into town.

They had already decided that they would settle in Windhoek, where they wanted to start a new life. They immediately boarded a public service bus and began the journey to the city, over two hundred kilometres away.

Once in Windhoek they checked into a cheap hotel where they planned to stay for a while. When they had put their luggage in their hotel room, they got out and went downstairs to the restaurant. Douglas bought a copy of the *Windhoek Times* from the news vendor at the entrance and they sat at an unoccupied table.

"What do we have for lunch?" Douglas asked as he began flipping through the newspaper.

Nancy reached for the menu on the table and scanned it carefully. Douglas continued reading the paper.

"These people are really funny," Nancy commented and patted Douglas on the shoulders.

"Why?" he asked.

"They cook dog meat," Nancy said.

Douglas looked at the menu.

"Since when did dogs become edible?" he asked, smiling.

"I'm surprised," Nancy said.

"I guess it must be delicious. Can we try it?" he asked.

"You must be crazy, Douglas. That will be the last thing I try."

"Look at it this way, Nancy, if they have included it on the menu then it must be fit for human consumption," Douglas said.

The waitress came to their table.

"What would you like to eat?" she asked.

She was a middle-aged woman and had a broad smile.

"Dog meat and rice," Douglas said.

"And a plate of rice with goat stew," Nancy said.

"You are new in this city?" the waitress asked.

"Why?" Nancy asked.

"You look new and you have just been arguing over dog meat. Namibians can't do without it in almost every meal."

"Is it delicious?" Nancy asked.

"Very. It's good that you want to taste it," the waitress replied.

"I'm trying to convince her that it must be okay for human beings but she won't listen," Douglas said.

"Where do you come from? Angola?" the waitress asked.

"We have just arrived from East Africa. Ever heard of a small country called Kenya?" he asked.

"So you are Kenyans," the waitress said her face brightening.

"Yes, we have just arrived," Douglas said.

"I like Kenya very much," she said, "the country sent her troops here to be part of the peace keeping force during the election organised by the United Nations after our independence."

"That is where we come from and it is unheard of for people to eat dog meat," Nancy said.

"You should taste it today and you will wish you had tasted it earlier," the waitress said and walked away.

"She is a nice lady. We should enquire from her where we can get a house because we cannot afford to stay in this hotel for long," Douglas suggested.

The waitress came back a few minutes later carrying a tray. On it were two plates of rice and meat as well as beautiful mixture of spices and heavy soup. She placed the tray on the table as Douglas and Nancy stared at the food.

"Is this dog meat?" Nancy queried.

She could have sworn that it looked like ordinary meat.

"Yes," the waitress said.

Douglas picked up a piece of meat from the plate and put it in his mouth.

"Mmmmm, it's delicious," he said as he chewed. Nancy looked at him and she too took a piece and ate. The waitress smiled and was about to walk away when Douglas spoke.

"There are a few things we would like to ask you about Windhoek, if you don't mind madam," he said.

"I'll tell you whatever you need to know," she answered.

"Get yourself a drink as we talk. It'll be at our expense," Nancy said. "And bring soda for us to wash down the food with."

"Oh, thank you," the waitress said and walked back to the counter. She came back with three bottles of soda and sat beside Douglas.

"What exactly do you want to know?" she asked as she sipped her drink.

"We would like to know where we can get a small house to rent because we can't afford staying in hotels. We'll be glad if you can advise us on where we can get such a house," Douglas said.

"There are many houses available in different parts of the city but it is one's financial position that matters. We have areas for the lower middle class, the middle class and the upper middle class people as well as the posh areas for millionaires," the waitress said.

"We would like a cheap house," Douglas said.

"There is an estate four kilometres from here called Dordham. It has cheap houses going for about a hundred rand per month. My brother owns some and I can ask him whether he has an empty one which you can occupy," the waitress offered.

"We'll appreciate if you do," Nancy said. "By the way, I'm Nancy and he is Douglas."

"I'm glad to meet you. I like Kenyans. My name is Jane Pawezi."

"Glad to meet you Jane," Douglas and Nancy said in unison.

"Are you staying in this hotel?" Jane asked.

"Yes, we are in room 36," Nancy said.

"How much is the fare from here to Dordham?" Douglas asked.

"Just three rand. It isn't far," Jane said. Douglas fished out a twenty rand note from his pocket and gave it to her.

"Thanks for your help. Please have this and talk to your brother," he said.

"Thank you very much. I'll be off duty in two hours and I'll go to see him then. I'll inform you immediately I get back."

When they were through with the lunch and drinks, Jane went back to the counter while Nancy and Douglas went back to their room.

"Everything is going well so far. God is really with us," Nancy said as she lay on the bed.

Douglas sat at the reading table and spread the newspaper on it.

"He'll take care of us until the end," he said.

"That waitress is a kind woman. I hope she convinces her brother to allow us occupy a room at least," Nancy said.

Douglas was silent. His concentration was fixed on the newspaper and Nancy knew from experience the futility of trying to engage him in a conversation at such a time. Ten minutes later he shifted his eyes and faced Nancy.

"I must write a short story and send it to the editor of this newspaper. They have a good short stories column," Douglas said.

"It'll be a good start for a writer in exile," Nancy noted with a smile.

Douglas also smiled and gave her the newspaper. He then got up from the seat and went to the opposite side of the room where the suitcase was.

Then he closed the suitcase and went back to the reading table. Immediately he began to jot down the first sentences of the short story he had told Nancy about.

Nancy was still reading the newspaper. Douglas placed the typewriter on the table and began to type out the short story he had just written. Twenty minutes later he handed it to Nancy; five typed pages of 'Lovers on the Run.'

"It's a thrilling piece but only a quarter of it is fiction," Nancy observed when she finished reading.

"It reflects our experiences to the present," Douglas said.

"I hope they will publish it," Nancy said.

"I don't see why they shouldn't," Douglas countered, as he put the script on the table.

They left the room at around 4.00 p.m. and went down the street to look for a post office. They saw one easily located a few blocks from the hotel. Douglas bought stamps and an envelope and addressed the short story to the editor of the *Windhoek Times*. They then took a stroll round the city before finally going back to the hotel at six. At around seven, just after they had taken supper, Jane came to their room.

"You are so lucky you two. There is an empty room which was vacated yesterday after the tenant was unable to pay the rent," Jane said sitting down.

"Thank you very much for the favour. We owe you a lot," Douglas said.

"It's a moral obligation to help others," Jane noted.

"Can we move in tomorrow?" Nancy asked.

"Yes, I have the key to the room," Jane said.

She dipped her hand into her pocket and produced a single key.

"My brother said you could move in any time. The rent is one hundred rand per month."

"We would be glad if you could take us there tomorrow," Douglas said.

"I can take you in the morning after my night duty."

"Thank you very much. We won't forget your goodness," Nancy said.

* * * * *

The following day Jane took them to Dordham estate and showed them the one room house. It was a relatively small room, made of bricks with iron roofing. It was about six by eight feet in size. In characteristic style the former occupant had taken all his belongings when vacating so the room was empty.

Dordham was a slum but was not as squalid as Witeithie. The houses were far much better than those of Witeithie village or any other slum that Douglas knew of in Kenya. All the houses in Dordham were made of bricks and roofed using iron sheets. The only resemblance the two had was the congestion and low level of cleanliness. Like in Witeithie, the houses here were so close to each other that only narrow gaps were left for people to pass. But for Douglas the place was heaven.

Jane, after taking them the room, took them around the estate to the furniture shop and other shops. They immediately bought a bed and a stool and took it to the room. Later, they went to another store and bought bedding.

In the afternoon, they checked out of their hotel room and moved into the room, happy that they had now found good shelter in which to start their life in exile. Douglas sat on the bed and wrote a lengthy letter to Nathaniel in Nairobi.

He expressed their sincere regrets that they had been unable to say farewell to Nathaniel but explained that they had to leave in a hurry. Douglas also explained what had happened to prompt them sail to Windhoek. He told Nathaniel of the attempt on his life and his constant fear that somebody was out to kill him.

Douglas then asked Nathaniel to go to Witeithie and tell his mother that he was still alive. He begged him not to tell her where he was as he feared that she would be terrorised by Edward into disclosing their hideout. In one paragraph, Douglas explained to Nathaniel how he would locate his mother's house. He also told him to collect all the money he was owed by the *Nation* for the articles he had written.

That night Douglas and Nancy made their first friends in Dordham. A young girl and a young man came into their room and introduced themselves as Sophie and Bernard. They lived next door and were husband and wife. As they explained, to survive in Dordham required that people be friendly so that they could be in a position to help each other in times of need.

Sophie and Bernard struck Nancy and Douglas as humble and sociable people. They invited them into their room and the four spent many hours talking. They talked about many things. Douglas and Nancy told of their experiences in Kenya while Sophie and Bernard shared theirs about Namibia, especially in Windhoek. One thing that Douglas admired greatly in Sophie was her sharp grasp of local and international politics. He admired her articulation of ideas which tallied with his ideological inclination. And though he could not admit that he himself was a radical, he noted that she was. He admired her for that.

That night, Douglas felt a strong wave of relaxation all over him. Their friendship with Sophie and Bernard had made him happy as it meant that their life in a foreign country had started positively. Soon, he hoped, they would be wholly integrated into the social life of Dordham and Windhoek. They would then make more effort to chart out a path for their future.

* * * * *

Nathaniel was busy keying the following week's article when a friend gave him an envelope bearing a Namibian stamp. He was naturally curious for he didn't have a friend in Namibia. Who could have written the letter? Quickly he tore open the envelope and removed the three paper from inside.

When he folded the letter and put it back in the envelope, his face wore an expression of relief intermeshed with surprise. He was relieved that Nancy and Douglas were safe and surprised they were so far. He had learnt of their disappearance the very day they left Nairobi. An anonymous telephone call had come to the news editor's office telling of a fire at the University of Nairobi. The editor had quickly dispatched a reporter to investigate the matter and there followed a detailed report. It was the room belonging to Douglas. However the two lovers could not be traced.

Nathaniel did not need to be told that the fire in Douglas' room was not an accident. He remembered what Douglas and Nancy had told him that very day about the American tycoon and how Nancy's father being responsible for the cocaine in Douglas' room. It was obvious that Edward had now set on a plan to physically eliminate Douglas.

As Nathaniel pocketed the letter he was relieved that the couple was safe. He had been worried that Douglas may already be dead and Nancy kidnapped and airlifted to America. This thought kept on nagging his mind even as he tried to ward it off. He could not dismiss it as a mere impossibility. He had seen too many real life thrillers to dismiss it as such.

What now surprised Nathaniel was how Nancy and Douglas had managed to get to Windhoek. He envied their courage and intelligence in manouvering their way through Mombasa yet Douglas did not have a passport.

Nathaniel knew how serious the case was and the danger of publicising their whereabouts. He knew too that if the information leaked, some lousy journalist might pick it up and publish it. That would be Douglas' peril because Edward would send his agents to eliminate him in Windhoek. In view of this, Nathaniel decided not to tell anyone. He would keep the information to himself and Douglas would be safe.

Douglas was owed two thousand shillings for his two articles which had been published by the *Nation*. Nathaniel immediately went to the accounts office after finishing the article he was typing and requested the accountant to give him the money on behalf of Douglas. When he received the money he left the office and went to his car. He started the engine and drove to Witeithie.

Nathaniel was not going to Witeithie for the first time. He had been there two years before to cover a demonstration by the villagers who were protesting against the government's indifference to their plight. Nathaniel had never forgotten that incident, though it was not the first of its kind he had reported on. What had struck him more than anything else was the genuineness of the complaints and the fact that the demonstration was organised by the young people in the village. A band of school boys had formed a lobby which they called 'Movement for the Defence of the Poor'.

The lobby had called a meeting in the village and most villagers had attended. When the leader, an eighteen year old high school student, stood to address the villagers he waved a copy of Ngugi wa Thiongo's 'I Will Marry When I Want'. He told the meeting that the people of Witeithie village had lived in poverty for too long because of the imbalance and injustice in the distribution of national resources. He said that it was the book's author, Ngugi, who had awakened him to the reality of their suffering. He then proposed the election of a group of people to a committee that would petition the government on behalf of the village.

A group of ten people were duly elected and the student was made the leader. The group had then approached their area Member of Parliament and given him a list of their grievances, first among them the deteriorating sanitation in the village and the acute unemployment. The Member of Parliament acted fast and promised to take the grievances to parliament, which he duly did.

One month and several weeks passed but the government had not done anything. Naturally, the people grew impatient. They had no alternative but to organise a demonstration under the leadership of the student who was now regarded as the village spokesman. When the anonymous call came to *Nation's* offices, Nathaniel was on hand to rush to the scene.

Nathaniel left the car at Ngong shopping centre and walked the remaining distance to Witeithie. He knew the village too well to go there in a car. Many instances had been reported when the villagers stoned any car seen in the village as they associated car owners with affluence. The villagers, like all poor people, had come to view the rich as their oppressors and Nathaniel did not blame them for that. He understood the factors at play, despite the fact that he himself was rich. Once in Witeithie, Nathaniel followed the directions Douglas had given but he reached one point where he wondered which direction to take. He approached a young man who was washing clothes outside a house and asked him whether he knew the home of Douglas Kamau, a student at the University of Nairobi.

"Everyone knows him here," the young man said and rose from the stool he had been sitting on. "I'll take you to the house, it's just a few metres away."

Nathaniel was then led to Douglas' home. Douglas' mother was sitting on a chair when Nathaniel entered. Her eyes were red from too much crying. She looked sad, tired and desperate. Behind her sadness, Nathaniel also discerned a seething hate within her.

"Don't be afraid *Mama*, I've brought you good news," Nathaniel said smiling as she appraised him from head to toe.

"Sit down please. I don't seem to recognize you," she said.

Nathaniel sat on a stool opposite her.

"My name is Nathaniel Bidu. Douglas is my friend."

He saw a sudden flicker of happiness in her face. The heavy cloud of hate began to slowly disappear and was replaced by an expectant look.

"You're a friend of my son's?" she asked.

"Yes, I've brought you news about him," Nathaniel said faintly.

"Where is he? Have they killed him?"

"He's alive and well," Nathaniel said.

"Where is he?"

"He has gone to another country. Somebody wanted to kill him and he had to escape. I also didn't know of his fate until I received a letter from him a few hours ago."

Douglas' mother broke into tears. They started as slow sobs that turned into loud emotional wails. She removed a handkerchief from her pocket and wiped off the tears but more continued welling out and the redness in her eyes became even more pronounced. Nathaniel patted her on the shoulder and tried to console her.

"Please don't cry. Douglas is fine and he's not in danger," he said to her.

She began to talk amid sobs.

"They want to kill my son. My son whom I have brought up in agonising pain. My son whom I carried in my womb for nine difficult months. My only son in whom I had high hopes. They have destroyed him just when he was fulfilling his dream. May God strike them dead. May all those who are involved die and may their stomachs burst open..."

"Calm down please. All will be well," Nathaniel pleaded.

Douglas' mother then began to relax and she stopped crying.

"I was told they wanted to burn him alive in his room at the university. That the following day the papers wrote about it and said he had disappeared with Nancy. That was when I learned of my son's fate."

"I work with one of the newspapers," Nathaniel said. "I came to know your son when he won a national writing competition organised by our newspaper. He's a very intelligent boy and I really admire him. Recently he and Nancy told me about their problems with Nancy's father."

"It's that girl who has caused his downfall," Douglas' mother said. "She's the one who is making her father want to kill my son. But she

is a good girl. She loves Douglas and doesn't hate poor people, unlike many other rich children. I told Douglas to stop his friendship with her and forget her completely. Only then would he live long. I told him all that but... but... he defied me." She began sobbing again. "I was told that he had disappeared with her."

Douglas' mother broke into tears again but this time she was able to quickly regain her composure. She wiped the tears with her handkerchief which by now was already wet. Nathaniel was aware that she had advised Douglas to forget Nancy. Douglas had told him so in the letter. But he did not support the idea of separating the two. He couldn't tell the woman so.

"Douglas told me to convey warm greetings to you and to bring you this money," Nathaniel said as he fished out two thousand shillings from his coat pocket. She looked at him, a smile trying to vainly form on her lips.

"Where did he get the money?" she asked as she took it from him.

"That is the money the newspaper has paid him for writing two good stories. He's a good writer," Nathaniel said.

"My son is a great man but they have destroyed his life," she said as she folded the money and put it into her brassiere.

"No. They haven't destroyed his life. He's a great writer and he'll continue writing well in future," Nathaniel said.

She was now more composed than before.

"Which country did he go to?" she asked.

"He has gone to Namibia and he is safe there," Nathaniel said.

"Tell him that I've sent him greetings when you write a letter to him. Tell him that I still have hope in him; he shouldn't give up. Tell him that I've forgiven him for ignoring my advice about Nancy."

"I'll tell him," Nathaniel said emotionally.

Later, Douglas' mother prepared tea for Nathaniel and they talked for three more hours. They discussed the plight of poor people in society and Nathaniel could then tell that she was regaining her confidence. The terrible hate that had been discernible in her eyes was now fully gone and she could smile with ease.

Before Nathaniel left, he gave her another a thousand shillings and she was very thankful.

Chapter Thirteen

“I’ve got him at last!” Julius Ogeto exclaimed. He shifted his gaze from the newspaper and looked all around him. Everyone in the library was now staring at him. He had almost forgotten he was not alone. Ignoring them, he looked back at the newspaper.

Julius was holding a copy of the *Windhoek Times*. He had gone to the public library partly to escape the immense heat of Mombasa and partly to be in a quiet place to put together, his thoughts.

He had gone straight to the newspapers’ stand and at random had picked up a copy of the previous day’s *Windhoek Times*. Julius, like the detective he was, liked reading fiction as it was in fiction stories that a detective got leads which he could use in his investigation cases. He had sat down in the library, opened the newspaper to page five and began to read the story, ‘*Lovers On The Run*’.

Normally, Julius was fond of checking the name of the author before he read a story. But in this case he forgot to look at the byline and just began to read. It was only when he was through that he threw a glance at the byline to identify the author of the thrilling piece he had just read. When his eyes landed on the name Douglas Kamau, he exclaimed with excitement.

Julius had a good reason to be excited. He now knew the whereabouts of Douglas and Nancy. If he was writing for a Namibian newspaper then it meant that he must be in that country.

For the last few days, Julius had been grappling with the issue of Douglas and for the first time in many years, a case seemed impossible. He had looked for Douglas and Nancy all over Mombasa without getting any success. Throughout, the thought of them having left Kenya did not cross his mind. He had not at any time thought of that possibility.

Julius left the library and went to a telephone booth by the roadside. He dialed Edward’s number and waited.

“Can I help you?” a tired voice he knew to be Edward’s asked.

“It’s Julius,” he said.

“Oh, Julius have you found them?” Edward asked expectantly.

"I'm closer to them now more than ever before," Julius said.

"What do you mean? Haven't traced them yet?" Edward asked.

"Not yet but I've just got a clue of where they are."

"Where is that?" Edward asked.

"They aren't in Kenya," Julius said.

"They aren't in Kenya? Where the hell are they?" Edward shouted.

"There is a possibility that they are in Namibia," Julius said.

"Who has told you that Julius?" Edward asked curiously.

"I'm a detective. I don't need to be told," Julius said, smiling.

He liked mystifying his profession.

"What do you have in mind now that you suspect that they are in Namibia?" Edward asked.

"That is exactly why I'm ringing you," Julius said. "I want you to get me money so that I can fly to Namibia and trace them there as soon as possible."

"That is a good idea. How much do you think you will need?" Edward asked.

"Fifty thousand shillings should be enough," Julius said.

"I'll give you seventy thousand shillings so that you'll have no excuse should you fail to do the job."

"Thank you for that. I'll give it my best shot."

"When will you be leaving Kenya?" Edward asked.

Julius glanced at his watch. It was some minutes to noon.

"I'd have liked to take the three o'clock flight."

"Okay, I'll instruct my bank to transfer the money to the Mombasa branch. You should be able to get it from there. That should take a maximum of one hour and then you can leave anytime you deem appropriate," Edward said.

One hour later Julius presented his identification documents to the Mombasa branch of the Standard Bank and was given seventy thousand shillings. Then at exactly 3 p.m. he boarded a plane for Windhoek.

He arrived there at dusk and checked into a hotel. The following morning he took a taxi and directed the driver to take him to the offices *Windhoek Times*.

The editor of the *Windhoek Times* was a short bald bespectacled man. When Julius got into his office, the man regarded him carefully

from head to toe before flashing a broad smile and inviting him to sit down.

"Can I help you?" the editor asked.

"Yes sir, I'd like you to kindly help me over a small problem. It's not exactly a problem but it calls for your help," Julius said politely.

"Sure, sure, I'm always ready to help whenever I can. What is the problem?"

"My name is Professor Stephen Daku from the University of Windhoek's Literature Department," Julius lied.

The editor's face brightened.

"Oh, so you're a university don? I'm glad to meet you Professor," the editor said.

"I'm a keen reader of your newspaper especially the short stories column which is directly related to my field of interest."

"That is very good of you Mr Daku. We've always and will always continue doing our best to give the best service to our readers. We aren't prepared to relax our grip on the first position we have in the market," the editor said.

"As I've told you, I'm a keen reader of the short stories column. Recently, I happened to read a story entitled '*Lovers On The Run*' and I was impressed by the author's style. It's the type of writing which my department is committed to promoting," Julius said.

The editor smiled.

"That was one of the best stories we've ever published. Everybody has been talking about it," the editor said.

"What amazed me was that the author seems to be an up and coming writer and that is the reason I'm interested in getting his contacts so that I can discuss with him the possibility of admitting him into our newly established creative writing class. It's for both resident and non-resident college students," Julius said.

"When did you start the programme? It sounds very promising for the promotion of creative writing," the editor said.

"We've just started it and we are hoping to tap potential talent through national newspapers and magazines."

"You wanted to know the address of Douglas Kamau?" the editor asked.

"Yes," Julius said

"You'll perhaps be surprised that he is from Kenya. He just arrived here a few days ago and wrote the piece," the editor said.

"So he's Kenyan? Where does he go to school? Julius asked.

"He told me he was a student at the University of Nairobi before he came here. He said some people wanted to kill him but he didn't elaborate. I'm very proud of him. I'm sure he'll propel our newspaper to greater heights of progress if he agrees to take a permanent column," the editor said.

"What is his address? I already have a strong feeling that he's the kind of person we are looking for," Julius said enthusiastically.

"He is staying at Dordham Estate house number 35," the editor said. Of course, Julius did not have the slightest idea of where Dordham Estate was but he could not show it to the editor. Being a don at a local university he would be expected to know Windhoek well.

"So he lives in Dordham?" Julius asked.

"He told me that he came with his girlfriend," the editor said.

"He came to see you here in the office?" Julius asked.

"Yes, in fact, he was here yesterday morning. He is a nice boy, very intelligent," the editor said.

Julius glanced at his watch in a conclusive manner.

"Thank you very much for the information sir, I'll leave now," Julius said.

"Thank you for calling on me. I'm always ready to help, especially in matters pertaining to the promotion of writing in this country," the editor said.

Julius left the office and walked down the street, his face radiating joy. He bought a copy of the *Windhoek Times* and hailed a taxi a few blocks down the street. He instructed the driver to take him to Dordham.

It did not take Julius long to trace house number 35. He walked a further distance and stopped. He looked at the house as he pretended to be tying his shoe laces. Shortly he saw Nancy get out of the neighbouring house and enter house number 35. His heart skipped a beat as he rose and began to move away. As he walked on, he threw glances at the house and saw a young man emerge through the door holding a glass of water and a tooth brush in his hand. That must be Douglas; he thought.

Julius then took a taxi and went back to his hotel from where he rang Edward to inform him that he had traced his daughter and her boyfriend.

Edward was excited when he heard the news. He was asked by Julius what further steps he wanted him to take but he said that Julius should remain in his hotel room pending further instructions. Meanwhile Edward placed a call to Romthex and asked to be connected to Roger Mathews.

"Professor Waihenya?" Mathews' voice asked after a few minutes.

"Yes, Mr Mathews. How is it down there?" Edward asked.

"Oh, everything is pretty good, Professor. How is the deal so far? Has Nancy softened?" Mathews asked.

"Well, that is exactly why I'm ringing you. As I told you, positive results don't seem near but there is great hope," Edward said.

"How is it so far?" Mathews asked curiously.

"Well, when the cocaine operation failed, I embarked on a plan to totally eliminate Douglas but he managed to escape. He went to Windhoek in Namibia with Nancy and I had to enlist the services of a good detective to find out exactly where they were. The detective just rang me to say they are in a certain estate. He's awaiting further instructions," Edward said.

"They are in Namibia! That girl must be funny. I've never come across a girl who runs away from a gold mine. I'm used to seeing women of all ages seriously engaging in a frantic rush for wealth. Everyone wants to get a man who is a winner but Nancy appears different. That is what makes me even more determined to get her. She must be a unique girl."

"Don't worry. I'm sure you'll get her though it may take some time. What would you advise me to tell the detective?" Edward asked.

"Well, let me think," Mathews said.

There was a momentous pause.

"I'm of the opinion that we should instruct the detective to start working on a scheme to shatter Nancy's relationship with Douglas the way he knows best."

"He has a national reputation for excellent work, however complex the case is. I'm sure he can handle the situation comfortably," Edward said.

"If you're confident of his competence, I think you should give him the assignment," Mathews said.

"I'll do that. I'll also contact you immediately something comes up."

"I'll be glad to hear from you. Before I forget, I've talked to the World Bank president about the job you wanted. He feels that a vacancy can be created at the bank's East African office when the time is ripe. I'll impress upon him to do it fast," Mathews said.

"Oh, thank you. I feel greatly indebted to you. Thank you very much."

"Well, as for the loan to your bank, the Board of Directors is already looking into the issue and I hope there will be a positive response before long," Mathews said.

"I'll highly appreciate that on behalf of the African Development Bank and Africa," Edward said.

"Otherwise, how are things down there in Nairobi?" Matthews asked.

"I'm still trying to put them right," Edward said.

"Inform me of any new development."

"I'll contact you as soon as something comes up," Edward said.

"I'll be waiting to hear from you Professor. Have a good time," Mathews said and hang up. Edward replaced the receiver, then picked it up again to dial Julius' hotel number.

"Julius on the line."

"It's Edward."

"I've been waiting for your call, Professor."

"Wait for me in the next few hours," Edward said.

"You want to come over here?" Julius asked quickly.

"Yes, the instructions I've for you can't be given over the telephone."

"I am staying at Joskim Hotel at the centre of Windhoek. I'm in room number 73."

"Okay, just wait for me. I'll be there in the next few hours," Edward said and replaced the receiver.

One hour later, he was in a private jet heading for Windhoek.

* * * * *

"What I'm going to tell you is strictly between you and me. If the information leaks then it is obviously one of us who will have leaked it and there will be dire consequences," Edward said.

He was in Julius' room at Joskim Hotel in Windhoek where he had also checked in. Julius had been sitting on his bed reading a novel he had bought down the street, when Edward got in.

As Edward spoke, his eyes rested on Julius' face. Julius could tell from the look that he was serious. He knew that what Edward had said was not a threat. What did he want to tell him that was so secretive? Julius wondered.

Aloud he said, "Of course, you know that my professional oath prohibits me from divulging information given to me by a client Professor. You can trust me with your most guarded secret."

Edward smiled. He tapped his fingers on the table and took a sip of the wine he had been holding in a glass. Then he faced Julius.

"I trust you of course, Julius. I've worked with you for too long to doubt your sincerity. Well, the instructions that I'm to give you require that I first furnish you with background events."

Edward paused to gulp down his drink. Julius was curious and he looked at him expectantly. Edward liked it that way. He enjoyed commanding the full attention of his audience. It made him feel big.

"What I want you to do is to shatter Nancy's relationship with Douglas the best way you know. Make sure that Nancy ends up hating Douglas."

"Right here in Windhoek?" Julius asked.

"Right here," Edward answered. "Now let me tell you the background information so that you embark on the assignment with all the clues necessary. Well, the truth is that Roger Mathews is interested in Nancy." Edward paused and took another sip.

"The executive chairman of Romthex International, you mean!" Julius exclaimed, his mouth agape.

Had he heard the words right? He could have sworn that his ears were not waxy, so he must have heard correctly.

"Yes," Edward said faintly. He smiled at the visible confusion on Julius' face and he continued. "He has fallen head over heels in love with Nancy and Douglas must be eliminated from the scene at all costs."

"I can't understand the whole thing," Julius said.

"The earlier you understand it the better. There is nothing hard to understand," Edward said.

"You've talked of Roger Mathews having fallen in love with Nancy. Have I got it right?" Julius asked.

"That is right," Julius.

"Can you please tell me how it happened, if you don't mind me asking?"

"I don't think the basics matter a lot, Julius. What you need to know in this case is that Nancy is opposed to giving in to Mathews' seduction and she has to be forced in a tactful way. That is exactly where your assignment comes in. You have to totally crash that very strong bond between her and Douglas," Edward said.

Julius was still confused.

"Why should Nancy refuse to give into the seduction of a man of Mathews' status in society? The whole thing seems unreal, I must say, Edward," said Julius.

"It's also battles me. In fact, Nancy has no drive for material gain. She even refused to be taken to school in a Mercedes Benz and instead opted to use public transport. Imagine I've been trying to woo her to go to a university abroad but she can't change her primitive belief that the University of Nairobi is the best for her. It sounds very unreal but the reality is that she turned down the offer to be Mathews' girlfriend. I feel betrayed by her stupidity," Edward said.

Julius listened attentively and he seemed to be wishing silently that he was in Nancy's shoes. If he had been, he would certainly have

jumped for the offer without hesitation. After all, what mattered in this world? Was it not material and social prosperity, regardless of how one attained it? Julius felt an urge to ask Edward some questions but he did not.

Finally he said, "I'm surprised that Nancy is so different from the world."

"Those were the instructions I couldn't give over the phone," Edward said. "Your assignment is to break Nancy's affair with Douglas and pave way for the American. Can you do that?"

Julius was silent for a while. He gazed at the opposite wall without seeing it, not because he had closed his eyes, but because his thoughts were not in the room. He was busy thinking about what he had just been told. There was Nancy and Douglas, the seemingly inseparable lovers; there was nothing unusual about it. Then there was Roger Mathews who had fallen deeply in love with Nancy. Then he thought about Edward wanting him to break the relationship between Nancy and Douglas to pave way for Mathews. This was where the unusual element was. How did the American tycoon fall for a Kenyan girl? What now remained to be solved was how he would go about the assignment of shattering Nancy's relationship.

If Julius had been frank, he would have told Edward that the assignment was not an easy one. But he knew that he could not be frank. The thought of handling a case in which Mathews had vested interests made victory a must. He had never come so close to glory and he must not lose his chance now. As his mind ran wild, Edward's question echoed in his ears. He knew he must answer and he knew the answer he must give. His eyes began to see the wall as he turned to face Edward, his lips opening to say the words he knew he must say.

"Why, of course I can. That is a simple job. I've handled harder assignments," Julius said

Edward looked at him straight in the face without blinking, as if searching for the truth or otherwise of the statement. Julius was an expert in reading body language and he did not let his eyes betray him. He looked straight back and took a sip of his wine; Julius knew he had deceived Edward. He knew that he had made him believe that the assignment was simple.

"How much money do you need for the job?" Edward asked.

"Eighty thousand shillings," Julius said quietly.

Edward didn't argue. He was not the type to argue over money when he badly wanted something done. Of course he knew that the sum asked for was too much, but why create a fuss when he could afford to pay Julius a million times more for a successful job? He dug his hand into his coat pocket and produced a cheque book. Tearing a leaf he signed out the money payable to Julius at Nairobi's Barclays bank. He handed the cheque to Julius and returned the cheque book in his pocket.

"You'll cash it in Nairobi when you are through with the assignment," Edward said.

"Thanks a lot. I'll put all my energy into this job," Julius said as he put the cheque in his wallet.

"Call me any time if you need any help. I'll fly to Nairobi tomorrow morning," Edward said.

"I'll do that Professor," Julius promised.

They drank more wine for the another twenty minutes after which Edward went to his own room to sleep.

By the time Julius got out of bed the following morning, he had already made up his mind that he would concentrate his energies on creating a scandal that would bring Douglas down. What he knew he must do was to carry out investigations to determine what sort of scandal he would start. He went downstairs to the restaurant for breakfast and then went down the street to a general shop.

Julius bought a shaving machine, a medium-sized mirror, a white overcoat, antiseptic liquid for use as aftershave and a piece of cloth used by barbers as a sort of napkin for their clients. With these paraphernalia he would impose himself as a barber at Dordham, and hopefully get an opportunity to learn more about Douglas' and Nancy's social environment.

When Julius went to Dordham, he put on the white overcoat and carried the barber's tools in a small box which he had bought. He went to every house asking whether there was anybody who wanted to have a shave. In some houses he was insulted and sent away unceremoniously.

"You think we mint money to dish out to bloody mobile barbers?"

"We can shave ourselves comfortably."

Some people were good however. They told him politely that they would shave another day. Others told him that they were flat broke while yet others congratulated him for starting that kind of business instead of breaking into people's houses at night. This was something that was rife in Dordham, because people were desperate for money.

By the time he reached Nancy's house, he had already shaved two people. He knocked at the door faintly and waited. A male voice answered, inviting him in. Julius pushed the door faintly and got in, Douglas sat on the bed writing and Nancy sat on a stool reading a newspaper. In front of her was a stove on which was a pan and some food was cooking. When Julius pushed the door open and got in, they both turned to face him.

"Excuse me please," he said as he put down his box and opened it.

"I'm looking for people who would like to have a shave," Julius continued.

He now held the shaving machine in his hand as he faced Nancy and Douglas confidently.

"Are you a barber?" Douglas asked.

"Yes my friend. I go round people homes shaving people. You know, I like saving the energy of my customers. I assure you my work is perfect. Would you please like to give it a try?" Julius asked.

He was behaving so normally that no one would ever have thought he was a fake barber. He moved closer to Douglas and began to feel his hair with his fingers.

"I think it really is good hair but it needs some shaving," he said.

Nancy was smiling slightly as Julius felt Douglas's hair with his fingers.

"Do you think it is shaggy, Nancy?" Douglas asked.

"It depends on whether you want it trimmed," Nancy said.

"How much are you charging?" Douglas asked.

"I am very considerate to my customers. You know some barbers lose customers by charging too much. One rand is okay for me. And I'll shave you in the style you want," Julius said.

He was already removing the mirror from the box, and the piece of cloth. Douglas threw a glance at Nancy. It was obvious from his facial expression that he had fallen for a shave. After all, it was long since he had trimmed his hair and besides, one rand was a fair price.

"I think I'll have a shave," Douglas said.

"I'm sure it will make you smarter," Nancy assured.

"And more handsome," Julius said. "Where will you do the shaving? Inside the house?" he asked.

Nancy rose from the stool and put the newspaper on the bed. Douglas put down his pen and rose.

"Let it be done outside," Douglas said as he lifted the stool.

The barber took his paraphernalia and they went out. Nancy too followed them.

Douglas put the stool by the wall and sat on it. Julius, who was now busy whistling a musical tune by Kenny Rogers, wrapped the piece of cloth round Douglas such that it covered his whole body. Only the head remained uncovered and the hair would just fall on the cloth. Julius would then remove the cloth carefully and collect the hair to avoid dirtying the place.

Julius did not encounter any problem with the task. Indeed he had not decided to act as a barber just for the sake of it. Years back, after secondary school, he had worked as a barber and had never forgotten how to shave. He had failed in school and he knew no one would ever employ him if he followed the right channels. Julius had then decided to be self-reliant. Since his academic certificates would not earn him his livelihood, then his hands would. He had immediately thought of becoming a barber. Though he had never been bright in class, he was able to do manual and practical things more easily. At that time, young people despised the idea of being barbers, especially after secondary school. However, Julius' wisdom indicated that if he became a barber he would get a lot of money as the trade was not overcrowded. He vowed not to mind what other people said knowing they would mock him.

True to his vision, he had performed so well as a barber that before long he had saved enough money to enable him make his next step in life. He had enrolled in the Nairobi Detective School and paid the

fees himself. Over the years, he graduated and set up a small private detective firm.

As he shaved Douglas, he behaved exactly as he had thirty years ago. He had developed a habit of whistling beautiful tunes to entertain his customers.

"Turn to the other side," Julius said as he began to shave. "Douglas is having a shave!" a voice asked.

Julius turned to see who had spoken.

It was a young beautiful girl standing beside Nancy at the door,

"Make some tea with that. I have plenty from my parent's home," the girl continued.

"Thank you very much Sophie," Nancy said as she took the bottle of milk.

Julius watched the girl walk away and get into the next house as Nancy went inside to keep the milk. Julius continued shaving Douglas.

"Who is that? She is very generous," he observed.

"A good neighbour. She is a family friend," Douglas said.

Julius tilted his head.

"Is she married?" he asked.

"Yes, her husband is also a very good man. Both of them are our friends."

Julius swallowed that bit of information and his detective nerves began to vibrate. The girl had a husband and she was a good friend of Douglas and Nancy. He would use her and her husband to frame up Douglas in a sex scandal.

"Your head is now becoming very neat. I told you I shave very well without overcharging my customers," Julius said.

Douglas was viewing himself through the mirror to monitor how he was being shaved. The grin that grew on his face indicated that he was satisfied with the barber's work.

"It's a good job," he agreed.

The barber did the final touches and then combed the remaining hair. Then he carefully removed the cloth and collected the bits of hair on it. He took the antiseptic liquid and applied in small droplets round the edges of Douglas' hair.

He returned the bottle to the box and faced Douglas.

"The job is now done," he said.

Douglas looked carefully through the mirror and felt the hair with his fingers.

"You've done a very good job. Thank you very much. It's long since I had a nice shave," Douglas said.

He handed back the mirror to Julius who kept it. Douglas rose from the stool, handed Julius one rand.

"Thank you very much, my friend. Thanks a lot. I'll shave you even better next time. Thank you," Julius said in a well feigned emotional outburst.

He took his tool box and began to walk away. Then as if he had just remembered something, he walked back to the house and peeped through the door.

"Goodbye madam," he said

"Goodbye to you," Nancy said.

Julius then walked away to the next house whose owners Douglas had described as their good friends. He knocked the door twice and was invited in.

"Excuse me please, would you like a shave?" he asked after he pushed the door.

"No, my husband isn't home. Perhaps he would have liked a trim," the girl who had given milk to Nancy said.

She was sitting on a chair peeling potatoes.

"I think I should come back later. When is he likely to be back?" Julius asked.

"Maybe by noon. That's the time he gets back from work."

"Okay, thank you very much. I'll check on him later," Julius said.

He got out of the house and walked away.

Julius went round Dordham looking for other people to shave. He shaved two more people before noon and then returned to Sophie's house to check whether her husband was in.

When Julius knocked at the door, it was a man's voice that answered. He knew immediately that the husband must be back and he was glad.

"Yes," Bernard said, as he opened the door.

"Hallo. I was here in the morning and your wife told me you weren't in. I'm a barber. I'll trim your hair very well for a very small fee. I can assure you that my work is excellent," Julius said.

"You're back just in time. Sophie has told me about you and I have seen how you shaved Douglas. It was a good shave. Well, I was wondering whether I really need a shave," Bernard said as he began to touch his hair with his hand.

Julius felt the hair all over with his hand.

"It's a bit long. It really needs a trim, my friend," he said.

"How much do you charge? You know economic consideration is a crucial factor."

"Just one rand. I hate exploiting people," Julius said as he began to unpack his tools. "Rest assured you will look very neat."

"Do you have one rand with you Sophie?" Bernard asked as he turned.

"Let me check," she said and felt into her blouse pocket. "Yes I think I have several coins." Bernard took two of the coins.

"Come out of the house with a stool," Julius said.

Bernard took one of the four stools in the house and walked out behind Julius who had by now removed the shaving machine, the mirror and the piece of cloth. Bernard put the stool against the wall and sat on it. Julius then wrapped the piece of cloth round him and began to shave.

"You want the American style?" he asked

"Punk?" Bernard enquired.

"Is that the name?" Julius asked.

"Which one do you mean?" Bernard asked.

"The one where the hair that is left at the centre is longer than that at the sides."

"That one is punk" Bernard said.

"I never went to school much but I know how to shave all styles. You young people are lucky to have education," Julius said.

"I've never seen you around. Where do you live?"

"I started this business today but I've been a barber throughout my life in South Africa," Julius said.

"You're a South African?"

"Yes, but I've decided that I must run away from the violence back there. Namibia is where I'll live until when the black man gets more rights in South Africa," Julius said.

"I hate the Boers and I wish they could all die," Bernard said cursing with bitterness.

"I swear by the name of my God, if I had a nuclear bomb I would kill all of them. They have been oppressing the blacks for too long and even now after our democracy," Julius said.

"Do you like Buthelezi and Mandela?" Bernard asked.

"Tilt the head to the right side. So you were told that I gave a good shave to your neighbour? By the way what is his name?" Julius asked. He knew how to avoid the topics which he didn't want to preoccupy a discussion.

"The young man from Kenya?" Bernard asked.

"Is Kenyan?"

"Yes, if you mean the one in house number 35," Bernard said.

"Yes, that one."

"He is called Douglas Kamau and he is very bright," Bernard said.

"I guess you must be very good friends. Kenyans are friendly," Julius said.

"They're very good friends of ours. He has very lovely and sociable wife," Bernard said.

"So the girl I saw in the house is his wife?"

"Yes, but they are new here. They came recently."

"Tilt the head downwards. Yes, that way. Do they come to visit you often? You know I was in Kenya three years ago. I had a friend and we became stowaways in a ship to Kenya when things got too rough in South Africa. We actually stayed in Kenya for a month before we were deported. When I was there I noticed Kenyans were fond of visiting one another in their homes. I found that very strange," Julius said.

"They come here many times and we visit them too. We have become like family members. They have lots of things to tell us about their country," Bernard said.

Julius combed his hair and removed the piece of cloth.

"The job is done," he said.

Bernard took the mirror which he had put down and began to examine the hair cut. When he was satisfied with the work, he gave Julius the mirror and rose from the stool.

"Thanks for the cut," Bernard said.

He extended his hand to Julius to give him the two coins to make one rand.

"Thank you very much friend. Thanks a lot," Julius said, as he put the money into his pocket.

He put all his tools in the box and walked away.

Julius went back to his hotel room and begun mapping out his next move. Perhaps if he had been working on a less sensitive case, he would have taken more time to plan his strategy. However, the sheer magnitude of this case and the gains that were due his way made him decide to act fast. Besides, he was convinced beyond doubt that he now had enough information to set upon his next move. He had established that Nancy and Douglas were very friendly with their next door neighbours, a married couple. Julius decided after a long time of thinking that the couple would have to be used in creating the scandal. All he would use was money to make them do exactly as he told them.

* * * * *

That evening at around seven, Julius left his hotel room and took a taxi to Dordham estate. He carried with him over ten thousand shillings which he converted into rands.

Sophie and Bernard were surprised when Julius entered their room. They had been taking their supper when they heard a faint knock on the door. It was Sophie who went to open it as both of them thought it must be Nancy and Douglas or other friends from their neighbourhood.

"You look surprised to see me," Julius said.

"You did a good job on Bernard's head," Sophie said.

"So he is Bernard. Well, don't be surprised. I have a few things to discuss with you," Julius said.

Both Sophie and Bernard were now looking at him even more curiously.

"Come in then," Sophie said and ushered him in.

She then closed the door and locked it as Julius sat beside Bernard. Sophie then sat on a stool and she, like Bernard, stared at Julius without saying a word.

"The truth is that I'm not a barber," Julius said at last. The duo stared at him in disbelief and threw questioning glances at one another. Fear began to show on their faces. No one said a word. Julius noticed their nervousness and he continued, "I'm a Kenyan detective on a special mission in Dordham." When Julius said this, the duo froze and then stiffened.

"I'm working on a case involving Douglas and I badly need your help," he continued.

"What has Douglas done?" Bernard asked curiously.

The fear on his face was beginning to ebb away on the realisation that he and Sophie were not in danger. That was what he had feared when the man had said he was a detective.

"A terrible crime for which there is no evidence so far. I want you to help me gather the evidence to provide a basis for his conviction in a court of law, either here or in Kenya," Julius said.

"How can we help?" Sophie asked.

"By the way I am David Kawenze," Julius said.

"I'm Sophie and he is Bernard. We can help you if we can," Sophie said.

"However, it's unfortunate because at present we can't be of any help to you. Personally, I can't tell you anything negative about Douglas, Mr Kawenze. For the few days I have known him, he appears to be a humble and nice man without any discernible criminal tendencies," Bernard said.

"Do you know why he left Kenya?" Julius asked.

The two exchanged glances as if they were wondering who would answer that question. Julius watched them carefully.

"They told us that some people wanted to kill Douglas," Bernard said. "That is all we know about why they left Kenya."

Bernard had now stopped eating and was fully concentrating on talking.

"It doesn't really matter what crime Douglas committed. What is important is for you to help me put up evidence to have him charged," Julius said.

"How can we do that?" Sophie asked surprised.

"It is very simple. You'll just have to follow the instructions I give you. We will have to frame Douglas," Julius said.

"How can we frame Douglas? He's our friend," Sophie said.

"It's very bad to betray a friend," Bernard said.

"There is good money for that. At the end of it you will get a thousand rands," Julius said and paused to let the words sink in.

He could have sworn that he saw a flicker of excitement on Bernard's face. Sophie too became more attentive and curious. Money meant a lot in Dordham and each one reacted when it was mentioned.

"I'll give you good money to do the job against Douglas," Julius continued.

Bernard and Sophie remained silent, looking at each other as if seeking each other's advice. If they could talk out their feelings they could have confessed that they were prepared to do anything for money. It was a rare commodity and it was what had prevented them from living the life they desired; a life where they could comfortably afford their basic needs. Sophie and Bernard too could have confessed that they liked Douglas and Nancy. They could have confessed all these openly and with all the confidence they could muster. Confess, also that they thought Douglas could not have committed any crime. They could have sworn to high heaven that within the few days they had known Douglas and Nancy they had come to like them a lot and would hate to participate in a scheme that would bring the couple down.

These were the confessions Sophie and Bernard wanted to make but they could not. They couldn't confess; not because they doubted their conscience but because like many other poor people, their conscience was so corrupted by the need for money that they could not live by their convictions.

What their conscience demanded of them was by far overshadowed by what reality demanded.

Julius had learnt a great deal about human psychology during his days as an apprentice. His teacher had emphasised the need to study

and interpret the human facial reaction in any given situation so as to make a fairly accurate projection of what one was thinking. It was this art that he was very good at and which he now used to identify the ambivalent attitude in Sophie and Bernard. He could see clearly from their faces that they were torn between two things; to take part in the act which their conscience did not approve of or to remain faithful to their conscience and miss out on good money. Julius was pleased with this. His teacher those many years back had taught him how to make use of a person's indecision. He had done this perfectly well over the years and he could do it now. He dug his hand into his coat pocket and produced two bundles of bank notes which were held together using plastic ribbons.

Sophie and Bernard gazed at the money in amazement. Julius could see a strong urge to take the money on their faces. This desire fought hard to dispel the cloud of confusion but without managing to do so; such that at the end only more confusion reigned. Julius could rightly tell from their reaction that they had never seen such an amount of money before.

"Each of you will get five thousand rands," Julius said.

Sophie and Bernard continued gazing at him and it was only Bernard who managed to nod slightly. Sophie did not react. She was mesmerised. She had to wait to get over the excitement of seeing the money which society had denied her. She was used to seeing Bernard holding about fifty rands at the end of the month, trying to bring up more and more austerity measures in their domestic budget as he tried to minimize expenditure.

"Will you take part in this game?" Julius asked and the question echoed in their eardrums.

They stole yet another glance at each other but before any of them could say anything, there came a faint knock on the door. Julius quickly put the money back to his pocket as Sophie rose from her stool and walked briskly to the door. She unlocked it slowly and pulled it open. Nancy and Douglas walked in.

The atmosphere in the room became tense and Douglas and Nancy discerned this at once. They could clearly see the confusion in Sophie's and Bernard's faces. Their eyes then landed on Julius before shifting to Sophie.

"What is the problem?" Douglas asked.

"No problem at all. Welcome," Sophie said,

"Good evening, I just happened to forget one of my tools here when I shaved Bernard during the day," Julius said to Nancy and Douglas.

"We've come to check whether you people have a torch. Our lantern has suddenly stopped working. The wick is very short and it cannot absorb kerosene," Nancy told Sophie.

She knew that she had to say what had brought them without any delay as there seemed to be something wrong in the room.

"We have a two cell torch. I hope it'll be of help," Sophie said and moved to the bed.

She raised the pillow and removed a torch. She then gave it to Nancy who thanked her. She and Douglas then left the room.

Sophie closed the door and went back to her stool. Just, like Bernard, she radiated a sharp glare of guilt on her face. They were both guilty because the people whom they were about to betray had met them at the very moment of conspiracy.

"Will you take part in the game?" Julius asked again.

There was a spell of silence and then Sophie blurted out faintly, "Yes we will."

"What are we expected to do?" Bernard asked.

"I'll explain it to you but I can't do it here," Julius said.

"You can't do it here. Where will you do it from?" Bernard asked.

"Let's go to my hotel right away. I'll give you half the money after giving you instructions and you'll get the remaining half when you are through with the job," Julius said.

"Where is your hotel?" Sophie asked.

"In central Windhoek," Julius said.

There was a short spell of silence.

Then Bernard said, "Let us go."

A few minutes later the three left the room and took a taxi to Julius' hotel. When Sophie and Bernard left the hotel 30 minutes later with half the money, they had been given detailed instructions on what they were supposed to do. Julius then picked up the telephone and dialled Edward's house number.

"Can I help you?" Edward asked from his bed in Lavington.

"It's Julius," Julius said.

"Oh, Julius, how is everything so far?" Edward asked curiously.

"Everything is okay. I'm sorry to disturb your sleep but it is important. It's an emergency," Julius said.

"Something new has come up?"

"I've gone a step further and this is where you and Mr. Mathews will be involved."

"What role shall we play?" Edward asked.

"Put simply, I've come up with a plan where I'll destroy Nancy's relationship with Douglas to an irreparable degree without her knowing exactly what happened. She will swear that Douglas is a devil at the end of the day. However, you have to be near to take over from there. The rest will involve you and Mathews," Julius said.

"What is the plan that you have come up with?" Edward asked.

"Let me not go into details over the phone if you don't mind. All I should say is that you and Mathews should try and come over here at least tomorrow. If you'll be here by seven o'clock in the evening, the plan will go through."

"So Mathews and I should fly to Windhoek tomorrow?" Edward asked.

"Yes. That is the only way we can go through with the operation."

"I guess you're still in the same hotel."

"Yes, I am," Julius said.

"Okay, see you when I come over tomorrow," Edward said and hang up.

Chapter Fourteen

Douglas was busy typing his fifth short story for the *Windhoek Times* when there came a faint knock on the door. Nancy who was lying on the bed reading a poem Douglas had written, rose to open the door. Douglas did not stop typing until Sophie's voice reverberated in the four walls of the room.

"Good evening Douglas and Nancy. How are you?"

"We're very fine," came the reply in unison.

"Come in for a cup of tea. It's rather cold," Nancy said to Sophie, who shrugged her shoulders and said with a broad smile.

"I've come for you Douglas. There is an interesting article I would like you to read in the *Daily Times* about student riots in Kenya."

"What exactly is it about?" Douglas asked, his eyes bulging with excitement.

Nothing made him happier than reading because he knew it enhanced his writing skills. He stopped typing and followed Sophie to her room as Nancy went back to the bed to finish the poem.

"Where is the article?" Douglas asked impatiently as he heaved himself on a stool in Sophie's room.

The newspaper was on the bed.

As Sophie closed the door behind her, she pointed at it and said, "That one over there on the bed."

Douglas rose from the stool and walked to the bed. He took the newspaper and sat on the bed, his eyes busy perusing the pages.

"It's on page six," Sophie said as she sat beside Douglas on the bed.

Although Douglas did not show it, he was surprised when Sophie sat so close to him as she had never done before. But he dispelled the thought and did not think anything sinister. After all Sophie was a good friend and she could not be up to anything immoral, he thought. Douglas' eyes first rested on the bold headline 'KENYAN VARSITY IN DEMO OVER CORRUPTION AND TRIBALISM'. Below it was a photograph of riot policemen holding batons as they charged at the rioting students and in the background of the photograph was a heavy cloud of smoke from an exploded tear gas canister. Douglas then began to read the article.

Douglas was just about half way when Sophie suddenly jumped from the bed and started screaming. Douglas was surprised and he too jumped from the bed thinking that perhaps Sophie had been bitten by a snake.

"What is the matter, Sophie?" he asked.

Then he saw her remove her blouse and throw it on the bed, Douglas did not have time to admire her breasts which were held well in a black brassiere. At that instance there came a knock at the door and she jumped to open it. Douglas saw Bernard jump in fuming with rage.

"What the hell is going on here?" Bernard shouted as he jumped in and looked at all corners of the room.

"He has raped me!" Sophie exclaimed as she cried and wiped tears from her eyes.

"You've raped my wife?" Bernard shouted as he advanced to Douglas.

The latter was surprised and confused. What was happening? Had Sophie suddenly gone beserk? He had once witnessed such a case when a classmate had gone beserk in class and started beating up the teacher.

Bernard held Douglas by the neck and began to shake him vigorously.

"I have not raped Sophie! I swear I haven't!"

Douglas screamed. Bernard dipped his hand into his pocket. Douglas could have sworn that Bernard had put something in his pocket but he didn't think too much about it. Then, to precipitate his confusion even more, Bernard jerked backwards and landed on the bed. He was screaming hysterically and holding his left arm. Douglas had just enough time to catch the glimpse of a red wetness that started to form on Bernard's shirt when the door bust open and Nancy strode in.

"What is the matter?" Nancy asked curiously.

"Douglas has raped me," Sophie said as she cried even more.

Nancy observed the semi nude body of Sophie and her eyes then shifted to Douglas who held a newspaper at a corner of the room, confusion showing all over his face. Then he saw Bernard wriggling in pain on the bed, holding his left arm where the shirt was wet with blood. She was about to ask another question when the door opened

and two armed policemen stormed into the room. Nancy saw them and then walked to the bed where Bernard was writhing in pain.

"What is happening here?" one of the policemen shouted as Nancy was examining Bernard's wounded arm.

Nancy turned to face the fierce policemen who were now advancing menacingly towards Bernard.

"What has happened?" the policeman asked yet again.

"Douglas has raped me and stabbed my husband when he came to my rescue," Sophie said as she broke into more sobs.

"Who is Douglas?" the policeman shouted in a deafening voice.

"That one holding a newspaper," Sophie said pointing at Douglas who was still holding the newspaper gazing at nothing in particular and too confused to say anything.

"So you're the one who is raping women in Dordham?" the policeman shouted and advanced towards Douglas as the other moved to Bernard to see the extent of his injury.

Before Douglas realised what was happening, a heavy slap landed on his left cheek followed by a sharp stab on his rib cage as the butt of the policeman's gun landed home. Douglas screamed in a hoarse voice, not from the pain of the heavy slap but from the stab at his rib cage. As if that was not enough, the policeman hit him yet again on the stomach with his hard soled boot and sent him reeling to the wall. Douglas fell on some cooking utensil, paralysed all over.

Nancy, who was gazing in bewilderment at everything in the room, did not seem to have noticed the policeman's beatings. Her mind was racing on wild track and threatened to crash anytime.

Then the confusion in the room was drowned by her shout. "Why have you done this to me Douglas?"

Douglas could not answer. He was in too much in pain to hear the question. And Nancy in any case could not have heard the answer even if Douglas had given it for at that moment she fell to the floor and lost consciousness.

The policeman who had beaten up Douglas began to handcuff him even before he rose to his feet. Meanwhile, the other policeman was helping Bernard to rise from the bed. By now people from the neighbourhood had rushed to the scene and were milling outside. Some

were peeping in through the half open door without attempting to get in because of fear of the policemen.

The policemen, holding Douglas and pulling him up, led him out of the house. Bernard followed. By now, Sophie had taken her blouse from the bed and put it on but she had not fully buttoned it. She watched as Bernard and Douglas were led out.

As Douglas walked out of the room, he was treated to cold stares from the neighbours. He saw the barber who had shaved him the previous day walk to the room and head towards Nancy who was still lying unconscious on the floor. He immediately remembered that he and Nancy had met the man in Sophie's room and the trio looked uneasy. Douglas also heard the crowd of people whisper different things which stung his heart sharply as he passed.

"Didn't I tell you that he looked like a rapist," one person said to another in the group.

The latter nodded and was about to answer when another voice from within the crowd said, "I knew he was a crook the first time I saw him. Can't you tell it from his face?"

Another voice said, "He should be castrated to teach others like him a lesson."

And yet another said loudly as if for Douglas' sake, "He is the one who raped my daughter as she was going to the shop last night."

The last voice that clearly came to his ear was, "These are the rogues who are destroying Dordham."

Douglas heard vaguely many more comments and tears began to streak down his cheeks. He tried to control his sobs but the tears kept on welling in his eyes. The comments and the contempt shown to him made him cry, not just with his eyes but also within him. He cried for his fate which he still could not understand. He could not understand a single thing about what was happening. All he knew for sure was that he was a victim of gross injustice. Who was perpetuating this injustice? At the moment he could not tell. Things were happening too fast.

"Move faster you imbecile!" one of the policemen shouted and as the word vibrated in his ears, a heavy slap fell on his cheek.

He cried even more and as the pain reached every part of his body he wished he could die. His was not just physical pain. It was a strong pain in his heart. As both the physical and internal pain overcame him, Douglas fell on the ground face first. He heard the policeman issue forth a stream of abuses but he was beyond coping, drowning in the world of unconsciousness.

* * * * *

Julius removed his pullover and began to fan Nancy. Then he called one of the people who were still gazing at the door and told the man to help him get Nancy up. They took her up, holding her hands and led her out of the room. They walked a few blocks away where Julius had parked his rented car.

When Nancy was laid comfortably at the back seat and Julius switched on the car's air conditioner to speed up her recovery, he took radio call device from his pocket and pressed the red activating button. Then he talked to Edward as he drove from Dordham to central Windhoek.

"Nancy has fainted Professor," Julius said.

"She has fainted you say! Why?" Edward asked from his hotel room at the Hilton in central Windhoek.

"Because of shock."

"Where is she now?"

"In my car. I'm driving from Dordham. What should I do?" Julius asked.

There was a moment of silence during which Edward consulted Mathews who sat beside him on a sofa in the room. Then Edward spoke.

"Bring her to this hotel for medical check up and do it quickly please."

"Will there be a doctor at the hotel?"

"Yes," Edward said. "Where is Douglas? Has the operation succeeded?"

"It has succeeded. That is why Nancy has fainted. She was shocked to learn that Douglas could betray her and rape a neighbour."

"And where is Douglas now?"

"He is on his way to the police station. Soon, he will be back in Nairobi."

"Okay, drive fast, Julius," Edward said with a note of urgency.

The red light went dim in Julius' radio call device as Edward pressed the disengaging button.

Julius increased pressure on the accelerator and had the car speeding along Grove Park Road. He drove along Nujoma Avenue and crossed to Digo Avenue. Then he drove for a short distance before coming to the Hilton Hotel. He parked the car at the parking lane and before he had even opened the door, five women and three men in white overcoats appeared. Julius was surprised. He did not know it but they were Mathews' medical team and they always travelled with him wherever he went.

"Where is the patient?" one of the men asked.

It was then that Julius realised that they must be the doctors whom Edward had talked about.

"In the back seat," he said as he opened one of the passenger door.

"Take her up to the room," the man who had spoken directed the women. The latter took Nancy from the seat and placed her on a stretcher. One of them placed a stethoscope on her chest and then looked at the man who had been giving the orders.

"It's just a normal shock," she said.

"Is it?" the man asked.

"Yes, just twenty six units," the woman said as she read the scale on the gadget.

"Okay, take her to the room," the man ordered.

"Let's go up to Edward's room," the man said to Julius.

The women carried Nancy on the stretcher to the entrance of the hotel. Julius and the two men followed behind them. At the lift they got her out of the stretcher and supported her to her feet. Then two of them got into the lift with her while all the others including Julius entered later.

The lift stopped on the fifth floor. Then they moved her to room six as directed by Mathews.

Edward and Mathews met the stretcher at the door when the first knock came.

"How is she?" Edward and Mathews asked simultaneously.

"She'll get well soon. It's just a normal shock. She must have been shocked by something," the woman said.

On the table a few yards away was a first aid box which the team of doctors had brought. Mathews had earlier on alerted the doctors to go to Edward's room and be ready to treat Nancy when she arrived. The woman now took the box, opened it and removed some medical equipment. She immediately began to treat Nancy as Edward and Mathews looked on anxiously.

"Will she take long to recover?" Edward asked.

"She may take another thirty minutes but she'll be okay," the doctor said.

"Thirty minutes," Mathews asked.

"Yes, I have given her the necessary medication to ensure that she recovers," the doctor said.

"And you're sure it's just a normal shock?" Mathews asked.

"It's just a normal shock of twenty six units and it doesn't pose any danger at all," the doctor said.

Mathews then looked at Edward and whispered, "Can we go to room 260?"

"What do you think we should do, everything now seems to be going well?" Mathews asked when he had closed the door.

As he had earlier said, things had not happened exactly as planned. In the original plan no one had anticipated that Nancy would be so overwhelmed by shock as to faint. This had come as a great surprise to them. It had been planned that soon after the fake rape was over, Edward and Mathews would pay Nancy a visit and pretend to be consoling her. They would then convince her to go and resume studies in America. This time Edward was sure she would have no grounds to object. But now a new twist had developed and the two men had to replan their next move.

"The good thing is that the first phase of the plan has been successfully. Douglas has been framed and it's possible that Nancy is indeed convinced that he raped Sophie. That could be the reason why she fell unconscious," Edward said.

"So what about setting on the journey to America right way?" Edward asked.

"Before she recovers?" Mathews asked.

"She should regain consciousness in the plane. She shouldn't at all be told what exactly happened. She should just know that she fainted and was taken to the police station from Bernard's room. Then the police saw her passport and contacted me. I came immediately to Windhoek from Nairobi and telephoned you. Then because of your concern for her health, you came from America to see her. She also should be told she was unconscious for over eleven hours," Edward said.

"That is a good idea. After all, she won't know the truth about time because when we land in America it will be day," Mathews said.

"I think the rest will be dictated to by circumstances," Edward said.

"I'll secure a place for her at Harvard to take a course of her choice. She may want to continue with anthropology or she may decide to change," Mathews said.

"Harvard is a good university," Edward observed.

"Let's get moving now. We must get to the Airport," Mathews said.

They got out and went to Edward's room where Mathews' doctors were still attending to Nancy as Julius looked on.

"We're setting off on our journey to America immediately," Mathews said to one of his men.

"Before she recovers fully?" the man asked.

"She'll recover on the plane," Mathews said.

"Thank you very much for a job well done," Edward said to Julius who all this while had been gazing at Mathews.

It was apparent from his facial expression that he was fascinated by the fact that he was standing a short distance away from one of the most powerful men on earth.

"This is the guy who did the planning?" Mathews asked in a near whisper to Edward.

"Yes," Edward said.

Mathews smiled, moved to Julius and patted him on the shoulders.

"You've done a good job," he said.

Exactly twenty five minutes later, Mathews, Edward, Nancy and the doctors were at Windhoek International Airport. A few minutes later the Pan Am Concorde which had brought Mathews was airborne and the journey to America started.

Nancy, still unconscious, was in the plane's clinic under the care of Mathews' doctors. Mathews had given them strict instructions that they should tell Nancy she had been unconscious for eleven hours and had been in a hospital in Windhoek before Mathews came to get her and take her to a better hospital in America. Of course, the doctors did not ask him why Nancy had to be given false information. Meanwhile, Mathews and Edward were in a private compartment where they discussed various issues including Edward's dream of getting the World Bank job.

* * * * *

Nancy felt weary all over. She was lying on a bed that she could tell from the smooth mattress and sheets. Then she could also detect the smell of what she knew must be medicine. It looked like she was in a hospital. She opened her eyes slowly. First she saw the fluorescent tube above her. Then she saw the two women who stood by the bed, looking at her steadily on the face.

Nancy shifted her gaze and looked around the room. It was a small room and had no other bed. She could see a cupboard near the bed. This must be a hospital, she thought.

"Where am I?" she asked.

It was the only question she could ask. One of the women smiled, raised her sheets, and felt her pulse.

Then she said to her, "You have been unconscious for the last eleven hours."

Nancy could have asked another question but when the women told her that, her mind began to reconstruct what had happened. Nancy saw with a clear vividness Sophie getting into their house in Dordham. She

saw herself go to open the door and heard Sophie's words reverberate in her eardrums, "I have come for you Douglas. There is an interesting article I would like you to read in the *Daily Times*". She saw Douglas follow Sophie out of the room as she went back to bed to continue reading the poem Douglas had written. Nancy heard Sophie's loud scream. She heard Bernard's booming voice. She heard Douglas' voice of defence. And she saw herself jump out of the room and dash to Sophie's room. She saw the half naked body of Sophie, heard her words clearly, "Douglas has raped me," and saw Bernard writhing in pain where Douglas had stabbed him. She was convinced that this was what had happened. And then she saw two fierce looking policemen storm into the room as she said, "Why have you done this to me Douglas?" and then darkness.

"Why did Douglas do this to me?" Nancy asked to no one in particular.

Tears began to gush out of her eyes in torrents as she broke into uncontrollable sobs. The two doctors consoled her.

"Please don't cry. Everything will be okay," one of the doctors said as she patted her on the shoulders.

The other doctor went out and came back with a tray containing drinks, fruits and a hamburger.

"Eat something. It will ease your tension," she said as she placed the tray on the small bedside table.

"Stop crying Nancy. It's not good for you," the doctor said.

Nancy stopped crying and wiped her tears using the bed sheet.

"Yes, that's good, relax now and eat the food," the doctor said.

She moved back to the cabinet and returned with some water in a basin.

"Wash your hands here Nancy and eat. You badly need the food to get energy," the doctor said as she placed the basin on the table.

When Nancy had stopped crying completely, she faced the food whose aroma filled her nose. She was hungry and she knew that she must eat. She knew that she must eat even in her confused state. She would then think things out later. She pushed the sheets away and half sat on the bed. Then she washed her hands in the basin and began to eat.

"Where am I?" Nancy asked yet again as she chewed the hamburger.

"Relax, you're on a plane," one of the doctors said smiling.

"On a plane? Where am I going?" Nancy asked, surprised.

"Going for a medical check up in America. You've been at Windhoek Hospital but you couldn't get well. You need further medical check up," the doctor said.

"Going to America? Who is taking me there?" Nancy asked as she began to drink the orange juice.

She had now relaxed and the weariness was slowly beginning to ebb away.

"When you fainted, your passport was found in your room in Dordham and it was discovered that you were the daughter of the Africa Development Bank Chairman. The police telephoned your father and he quickly came over to Windhoek. When you couldn't get well in Windhoek he began to make plans on how you could be taken to an American hospital. He telephoned Mathews. Mathews on learning of your condition decided to come and see you," the doctor said.

"I'm in a plane? My father came from Kenya? Mathews came to see me? These questions formed in Nancy's mind and competed for attention.

Aloud, she asked with her eyes fixed straight on the doctor's face, "Mathews came to see me?"

"Yes, he's on the plane with your father," the doctor said.

Nancy's mind began to run wild. She remembered what had happened when she and her family had visited America. Mathews had made open advances at her. Her father had supported the idea and had set upon destroying Douglas so that she could end up with Mathews. Nancy knew that she had been faithful to Douglas totally and vowed to remain so. But now Douglas had betrayed her. He had fallen for Sophie and raped her, possibly after she had rejected his request for sex. At this thought, Nancy began to cry again. She was crying because her life was ruined. Her parents had been unfair to her and Douglas had been unfair to her too. She felt that the whole world was unfair to her. She felt worthless and she badly wanted to die. This, she thought, would be the only solution to rid her out of her suffering.

"Relax Nancy. Please stop crying. Get over it. Just relax and take things easy," The doctor consoled her as she wiped her tears with a piece of cloth. "Eat the food. You need it."

Nancy relaxed and stopped crying. This time she was not going to cry any more. A few minutes later when she had begun to eat the food again, one of the doctors left the room and reappeared with her father. "Your dad has come to see you, Nancy," the doctor said.

Nancy was about to ask a question when she heard footsteps and a few seconds later her father appeared. He was followed closely by Mathews. Nancy gazed at them with an expressionless face as they walked swiftly towards her bed.

They said almost in unison, "Hallo Nancy."

Nancy felt a heavy lump up her throat and a feeling that could not wholly be described as hatred engulfed her. She wanted to tell her father to get out of her sight as she glared at him. She wanted to tell him that he had betrayed her; that he had made her suffer for nothing; that he had made her leave university and live far away in Windhoek. She wanted to tell Mathews also to get out of her sight. She wanted to tell him that he had been the architect of her problems. She wanted to tell the two men that she hated them to her bone marrow. She wanted to say in their faces that they were to blame for all that had happened to her. Yet she knew that she could not. She could not blame them for wanting to snatch Douglas from her. Douglas had betrayed her before she even was snatched away. Douglas had made her faithfulness, her suffering, her goodness and all that she had sacrificed for him, worthless. Douglas had deserted her at a time when she badly needed him.

It was hard for Nancy to believe that Douglas had done it. She briefly doubted in her whether Douglas had really betrayed her. To be frank with herself, Nancy could not recall any time when she had noticed anything suspicious about Douglas. In fact, their affection for one another had grown deeper as compared to their days in Nairobi. Nancy had never seen Douglas being interested in another woman. Sophie was their friend just as Bernard was. Nancy had never noticed anything fishy between Sophie and Douglas. Yet she knew in her subconscious that it was there. She met Sophie without a blouse which

meant that Douglas had raped her. Douglas had stabbed Bernard on the left arm as he was rescuing his wife that is why Bernard's arm was bleeding profusely as he writhed in pain. No one could have convinced Nancy that all this was not true. To her, Douglas had done it, he had betrayed her. As she glared at the two men before her, Nancy did not know exactly how to react. The two were devils but Douglas was now the greater devil. She felt defeated and lifeless.

Nancy opened her mouth without showing any emotions.

"I'm fine," she said.

"How are you feeling now?" Edward asked.

"Not bad," Nancy said.

"Sorry for the predicament," Mathews said.

"Thank you for your concern," she said.

"I was terribly shaken when I received the call from the police in Windhoek," Edward said.

Nancy kept silent and continued eating her food.

"Don't worry Nancy. You'll soon recover fully," Mathews said.

Then Mathews turned to the doctors and said to them, "Give her the best services to quicken her recovery."

Then he and Edward went back to their compartment.

When the plane landed in Atlanta, Georgia, Nancy had fully recovered and she seemed to be in control of herself. The original plan was to first take her to Atlanta General Hospital for further check up but it was later shelved when she said she was okay and did not need further treatment. The doctors also concurred. So, from the airport, they went straight to Mathews' home.

Mathews' wife had gone to Paris the previous week and she would not be back for about a fortnight. Mathews could not help thinking what a God-send chance this was. When he had encouraged Joyce to attend the sixth World Business Ladies Conference in Paris, she had been reluctant yet, Mathews had not done so as a result of any calculation. In fact, he had no idea that her absence would turn out to be a blessing to him. He however would get a good time to entertain and seduce Nancy.

"I'm very sorry for what Douglas did to you. It was inhuman. Really inhuman," Mathews told Nancy when they were all seated in his living

room, each with a mug of coffee which had been served by Joyce's sister who had been living there for the last three months.

"I sincerely never thought that Douglas could ever do such a thing," Nancy said as she sipped her coffee.

"The world is like that," Mathews said with a smile.

He was sitted beside Nancy in the sofa and he fidgeted to make sure that their bodies touched as they talked. Nancy was now very different from the girl who had shown total stubbornness when she had last been at Mathews' home. Presently, she did not show open disinterest in talking to him as had earlier.

"I really feel sorry for having hurt you Nancy. I want to beg for your forgiveness. It wasn't my intention to make you suffer," Edward said. He was at the opposite side of the table.

"I don't hold negative feelings towards you dad," Nancy said faintly. She doubted that she was saying the truth. Sure, Douglas had betrayed her; but supposing he had not? Wouldn't her father still not be guilty? Couldn't she be harbouring negative feelings towards him then? Nancy did not want to think about this now. She knew that it would only confuse her more and she feared the prospect of going mad because of thinking too much. She wanted to forget everything and she could only forget by assuming that nothing had happened. She would assume that she never met Douglas and that her father had never schemed to snatch him away from her. Only this would give her peace.

"You really must go back to your studies Nancy," Edward said and paused. "I've a strongly suggest that you should go join Harvard because your name has already been struck off the register of students at the University of Nairobi."

Nancy faced her father. She remembered how many times he had been her putting presure on her to join Harvard yet she could not agree to do. She knew that she had turned down the offer with good reason. She did not want to appear special and different from her fellow Kenyan comrades. She believed that she should not distance herself from the rest of society just because she was from an affluent family. This was the philosophy that had made her turn down the offer. Still she held onto it firmly despite her troubles but she knew that this time

there would be no choice for her. It was now either Harvard or no university at all.

Her name had been struck off the students' register at the University of Nairobi. She could have opted to wait for the next admission but that would mean waiting a whole year.

"I will be glad to resume studies," Nancy said and her father smiled. Nancy is a good girl now, he thought. He had feared all this time that she would be as stubborn as ever. The Douglas frame up had really worked.

"Which course would you like to take Nancy?" Mathews asked.

"I would like to continue studying anthropology. It's my dream subject. It's very interesting," Nancy said.

"I thought maybe you would like to change to something like political science or literature," Mathews said with a broad smile.

"I've never been interested in any of those," Nancy said with a smile for the first time.

Edward, who had been monitoring her mood smiled. He was now convinced that Nancy was a changed girl. His mind immediately rushed to the World Bank job. He was going to get it after all.

* * * * *

"That is where rapists belong!" the policeman shouted.

The words reverberated in Douglas' ear drums like an explosion of dynamite. Douglas felt the policeman's hard boot land on his back and he was sent reeling to the wall. He nearly hit it with his face but he missed it and he fell on the wet, stinking floor. He heard the sound of the policeman's steps as he walked out of the room. Then, the sound of the door's hinges as it was closed and the sound of the key as it turned.

Douglas began to cry as he looked fixedly at the cell's door. He was a man and he hated shedding tears but this time he did not have a choice. Tears just gushed out in a stream and rolled down his cheeks without him managing to control them. He could not control himself tears were pumped out by his emotions which he had no control over. It was his emotions which were reacting to his fate.

Douglas was still in a world of confusion. He was so confused that nothing made any sense to him. Not even the policeman who had just kicked him into the cell. The tears too that were flowing down his cheeks made no sense. All these things were a hazy mist in his mind. They were events to which he was just but a witness. Douglas felt strongly that he was in a Hollywood movie and he badly wanted to believe this. He had all the reasons to believe that all he was experiencing was a scene in a bad film. Everything seemed so unreal. As he now reminisced every detail in his confused mind, he became even more confused.

Sophie's visit to their room was normal, for she had done that many times before. Her invitation for him to go and read an article on Kenyan students in the *Daily Times* was normal, as indeed she had called him many other times to read one thing or another in newspapers or books. She, like Bernard, knew of Douglas' love for literature. What was unreal to Douglas was all that had happened from the time Sophie started screaming hysterically. To him Sophie had suddenly gone beserk. Nothing had convinced him more of this possibility than her act of throwing her blouse onto the bed, leaving herself half naked.

Then there had been a knock on the door and Sophie had opened it. Bernard had stormed into the room fuming with rage as Sophie shouted. Bernard had shaken him vigorously as he held him by the neck. Then he had felt him dip his hand into his pocket and although he had a feeling that he had put something there, the utter confusion had prevented him from checking what it was. Then he had seen Bernard jump backwards and fall on the bed and had begun to massage his arm. He was confused even more when he saw blood begin to wet his shirt around the arm. He knew it was blood. Douglas recalled vividly the confusion on Nancy's face when she was told that he had raped Sophie. He recalled how she had looked at the half naked Sophie and then at Bernard as he wriggled with his wounded arm. When Nancy looked at him, Douglas knew that she had believed what Sophie had said. She had believed that he had raped Sophie. Douglas recalled the hate he saw in her eyes as she looked at him and began to cry. He recalled the feeling of defeat written all over her face. He recalled how he had seen in her tears the agony of betrayal; Nancy had believed that he had betrayed her with another woman.

Douglas had watched Nancy as the two policemen brutally beat him up and he could tell that she was not even seeing him. He could see that her mind was not in the room but rather far away, drowning in a deep sea of troubled thoughts. When she shouted, "Why have you done this to me, Douglas?" he knew that those were the only words she could manage to say. They were words of despair as her tone told him.

Douglas had been unable to fight back the tears when he realized that it was not Nancy alone who had believed Sophie. The other people in the estate had believed her too. He had been unable to fight back the tears for the accusations they had levelled against him were too much. The tears had welled in his eyes with even greater force when he heard one woman say that he had raped her daughter.

The policemen had continued beating him as they dragged him to the Land Rover parked nearby. One of them had even spat in his face as they drove him to Windhoek Police Station.

At the Police Station he was hauled out of the Land Rover with even more beatings and taken to an office. There, he was ordered to turn out his pockets. He did as he was told and one of the things that fell out of his trouser pocket was a small pocket knife. It had blood all over. "What is this you brutal rapist?" a third policeman sitting at a desk had shouted.

Douglas was even more confused. How had the knife come to be in his pocket? Then he remembered the scene in Sophie's room. He had felt Bernard dip his hand into his pocket and put something inside. The whole thing was now clear before his eyes; Bernard had put the knife in the pocket. Why had he done that? Douglas could not get an answer for at that time the policeman who was seated at the desk rose from his seat and landed a heavy slap across his face. Douglas staggered and nearly fell to the floor. He felt very groggy and his head was now aching terribly.

"When he raped the girl, he stabbed her husband with it on the arm sir," one of the policemen explained.

"What other weapon do you have in your bloody pockets?" The policeman at the desk asked.

Douglas turned the remaining pockets out. Only coins fell to the floor.

"Remove all your clothes you filthy rapist!" the policeman bawled again. Douglas hesitated and just gazed at him.

"You've just one more second to decide whether to comply with my order or not," the policeman shouted as his fierce eyes gazed at him.

Douglas knew better than to disobey. He knew that he had no option but to strip naked as ordered. He removed his jacket slowly and put it on the floor.

He was starting to unbutton his shirt when the policeman shouted to the other two, "Do it for him. I've better things to do with my time!"

The two policemen sprang into action. Douglas felt one of them get hold of his shirt and tear it off. Then he pulled it aggressively and threw it on the floor. The other policeman, who had already unzipped his trousers, was now rushing them down his legs. "Raise your legs," he said.

Douglas raised his legs one at a time and the policeman pulled off the trousers and then the shoes and the socks with equal aggression. The other policeman pilled off his underwear as Douglas protested, he was given a heavy slap across the face. It made him think better then protesting.

As Douglas stood stark naked before the three men, embarrassed at the exposure of his privacy, the policeman at the desk turned to the other two and said, "Get him his uniform from the store!"

One of the policemen saluted and left the room.

"That is what happens to rapists," the policeman said, looking straight into Douglas' eyes.

The word rapist sent a heavy lump up Douglas' throat and he felt an urge to shout to the policeman that he was innocent. However another thought told him not to do so. Since his arrest he had not tried to argue with the policeman just as he had not shouted at the woman in the estate to tell her that he had not raped her daughter. Douglas did not see the need for an argument. He knew that everybody believed he was a rapist and nothing he could say would change their minds. He was not going to start defending himself now. Neither would he do it before a judge when they took him to court. They had tortured him more than enough and inscribed on him the label 'rapist'. Therefore there was no need to try to tell the world that he was not what it believed he was.

The world would continue believing that he was a rapist and that would not matter an ounce to him. What he knew would matter was the truth. He knew that he was not what the world was saying and that was all that mattered. A few minutes later, the policeman came back with the uniform.

"Here, take your free clothes," he said rudely.

The policeman threw the clothes at Douglas who quickly took them and began to dress. They could not be described as clothes, being just a vest and a pair of shorts. The shorts had about ten patches on them, but big areas still remained bare and they exposed his body. What was supposed to be a vest were loose fibres that must have been at least 30 years old. It did not make much difference wearing it or staying naked. One more disgusting thing about the "uniform" was the immense dirt, all accumulated over the years, and the strong smell on it. From a distance, you could not fail to make out the shape of giant lice crawling on the clothes.

God, what have I done to deserve this dehumanising treatment? Douglas cried from the depth of his heart.

"Now we're going to put your particulars down Mr Rapist," the policeman at the desk said. "What do you call yourself?"

"Douglas Kamau."

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"Dordham," Douglas said.

"I thought I was told you are a foreigner," the policeman said. Douglas' heart skipped a beat. So they knew he was not Namibian? he thought. What would they do to him? He preferred not to think about it. He was prepared for anything that would befall him because he knew that he was not guilty.

"I come from Kenya, but I live in Dordham," Douglas said.

"Do you have a visa that authorises you to live in Namibia?" the policeman asked.

"No," Douglas answered.

"So you are here illegally?" the policeman asked, as he jotted down the answers in a file.

"So you're here illegally to rape Namibian women," the policeman shouted, anger showing on his face. "When did you come to Namibia?"

"Three weeks ago," Douglas replied.

"By plane?"

"No," Douglas said.

"By what?"

"By ship."

"How were you allowed to leave the ship and enter the country without a visa?" the policeman asked.

"I was helped by the captain of the ship."

"He helped you to evade the law?"

"He helped me get into the country without a visa," Douglas said.

"He helped you to evade the law, you criminal!"

"Yes," Douglas said.

"Which ship did you come in? Can you remember its name?"

"MV MZIMA"

"Why did you leave Kenya?"

"Somebody wanted to kill me."

"You should have been killed. Rapists don't deserve to live," the policeman said. "Now, can you tell me briefly why you raped that woman and stabbed her husband on the arm."

"I have never raped anybody," Douglas said.

"You're now tempting me to distort your dental formular," the policeman said.

"I'm speaking the truth," Douglas said.

The policeman smiled a bit but forced the smile to fade quickly away.

He then took two sheets of paper and a pen from his desk drawer. Without saying anything else he put a carbon paper between the two sheets and began to write on the top one. Then he turned to the two policemen.

"What are your names, officers?" he asked.

"I am Victor Obedi" one of them said.

"I am Carlos Walapu," the other said.

"At what time did you arrest him?" the policeman asked.

"At around 7.30 pm," Carlos said.

"What is the full name of the young woman?"

"Sophie Mobesi," Victor said.

"And the husband who was stabbed?"

"Bernard Chimuli," Victor said.

The policeman then turned to Douglas.

"Do you know how to read and write?" he asked.

"Yes," Douglas said.

"Sign this statement here," the policeman then passed to Douglas the sheets of paper on which he had been writing as well as the pen. Douglas first read what he was supposed to sign.

"I, Douglas Kamau hereby agree that I raped Sophie Mobesi in her room in Dordham on Thursday, 10th June, 1991. I agree that I stabbed her husband, Bernard Chimuli, on the arm with intent to kill him when he came to rescue Sophie. I was later arrested by police officers Victor Obedi and Carlos Walapu and taken to Windhoek Police Station where I wrote this statement in front of Inspector Ben Toje. I agree that I was not tortured while in police custody and I was treated in a dignified manner pending my appearance in court. I agree that I wrote this statement of my own volition without any intimidation. I hereby commit myself to accept whatever disciplinary action the court will deem fit for my offence."

"I can't sign this," Douglas said and put the pen and paper on the policeman's desk.

He could not take part in his own oppression by signing a false statement. How could he sign a document which said that he was a rapist and that he had not been tortured while in police custody? How could he inscribe on his face a label he knew was not his? He did not mind if others inscribed it on him as they had already done but he could not bring himself to reinforce their evil scheme.

"You have five more seconds to decide whether to abide by my order or not," the policeman said.

"I won't sign the document," he blurted out.

"Give him the first dose Victor," the policeman said.

Douglas felt a heavy blow land on his nose and blood gushed out of his nostrils. He felt pain sweep all over his body. Clamping his nose with his fingers, he tilted his face upwards to control the bleeding.

"Is that enough or you need another one?" the policeman asked. Douglas heard the words but he didn't speak.

"Will you sign the statement?" the policeman asked.

"I won't sign it," Douglas said.

"Another dose is needed Victor," the policeman said faintly.

Victor reached between Douglas' legs with his strong hands and held his testicles. He squeezed them hard with his two strong hands. Douglas let out a hoarse cry of agony as the pain crept up his spine. He had never felt such pain in his life. The three officers burst into loud peals of laughter.

"Will you sign the statement?" the policeman asked as he looked straight at Douglas, who was now trembling in pain.

His nose had stopped bleeding and the blood had clotted around the nostrils. Douglas heard the policeman's question in his ears and he knew that he must do something. He was not opposed to death but he would have liked a honourable death. The men had proved beyond doubt that they were ready to keep on torturing him until he agreed to sign the statement or until he died, whichever came first. He knew that he must sign it to avoid death by brutal torture.

"I will sign it," he said faintly.

The policeman smiled.

"You shouldn't have been so stubborn," the officer said. "Obedience helps a lot in cases like this. You may even find yourself in a grave and no one will know what happened."

The policeman gave Douglas the statement and the pen again. Douglas placed the paper on the desk and scribbled his signature. Then he handed both the statement and the pen back to the policeman who smiled mischievously as he took it. Douglas knew that he had participated in a scheme against himself but he had not done it willingly. He had only chosen the better of two evils. He had done it as a last resort. Perhaps by signing it he would live long to fight more battles, he thought.

"That is how things are done here. You don't have to question anything," the policeman said.

He put the original statement together with the carbon copy in the desk drawer.

"Take him to the cell," the policeman ordered.

Victor grabbed Douglas by the arm and shoved him out of the door. Then he led him to the block of cells a few metres away.

Having been brutally thrown into the cell, he now retraced all these events, Douglas became even more confused. But despite the confusion he put two and two together. He knew the whole thing had been stage-managed. What he did not know was how it had been done. He did not know that the barber who had shaved him the previous day was the director of the scheme. He did not know that Bernard and Sophie had betrayed him. He did not know that the two police officers who had arrested him had not just appeared on the scene. They had been bribed by the barber. Douglas did not know any of these details and he just accepted the happenings as coincidence.

What Douglas knew as he sat on the wet, stinking floor was that Nancy had now been taken away from him. He knew then that Nancy's father had emerged victorious. But for how long would he remain the winner? It was this that Douglas could not tell.

From the depth of Douglas' heart, he loved Nancy truly. Nothing could make him stop loving her. Not even the knowledge that she had believed he was a rapist. Douglas could not stop loving her for he knew it was not her wish to hate him. He too could have been gullible had he been subjected to such a plot.

Douglas lay on the floor and tried to forget all that was happening. He tried to ward off the feeling of defeat which kept invading his mind, making him wish he were dead. Yet a strong voice within him kept on calling, "Nancy. . . I love you and I'll always love you till my death." It was this voice that made him strong. It made him overcome the feeling of despair and it reminded him that although they had snatched Nancy from him, he still loved her. He knew that although they could take her from him and torture him, they could not take away his strong love for her. This was his victory.

Chapter Fifteen

Nancy saw Mathews raise his right hand and place it round her shoulders. The left hand was holding her thigh, caressing it gently. She was now breathing harder and harder and something strong was choking her at the throat. Mathews kissed her gently on the lips and then he faced her. Nancy could not look him straight in the eyes. She saw something very strong in them that she did not want to see.

"I'm serious Nancy, I love you," Mathews whispered into her ear.

Nancy did not shift her eyes from her laps but she heard his words clearly.

The scene reminded her of Douglas whom she wanted to forget completely. It brought back into her memory his vivid picture. For a moment the picture stuck in her mind and she thought the present encounter was one of the many romantic scenes she had had with Douglas. The presence of Mathews with his hand round her shoulders and the other caressing her thigh ceased to exist. It was not Mathews who was fondling her. It was Douglas and she could see his dazzling smile.

"I really mean it, Nancy." These words, spoken by Mathews brought Nancy out of her reverie.

They erased the image of Douglas and she now saw Mathews and for once she shuddered at her fantasy. Why was Douglas haunting her?

She hated him for what he had done and now she even hated herself for keeping him in her memory.

Mathews kissed her on the lips again and began to unbutton her blouse. Nancy wanted to resist. She held Mathews' hand and pushed it off but Mathews persisted. He began to touch her breasts. Nancy wanted to say "no" but she knew she could not. If it were for a faithful Douglas she could have resisted but now she knew she should not. Douglas had betrayed her. She had put all her trust and confidence in him, given him all her love and all her faith. Yet at the end Douglas had betrayed her. He had hurt her feelings beyond repair. He had left a painful sting in her heart and she was very bitter over this. Nancy hated him now as much as she had loved him before the Dordham incident.

She wanted badly to have her revenge. She wanted to hurt Douglas just like he had hurt her. She wanted to do to him what he had done to her. Therefore she did not resist; giving in to Mathews would be her revenge. She would do it to hurt Douglas.

One thing led to another in that bedroom and soon Mathews was satisfying his passion. Nancy too, was purging the hate that simmered within her for Douglas.

"I'll marry you, Nancy," Mathews said three hours later as the two walked along a path at the orchard.

Nancy plucked an orange from one of the trees and began to peel it.

"What about Joyce?" Nancy asked without turning to look at Mathews.

Nancy was surprised that she was warming up to Mathews so quickly. From the time they had been talking in the presence of her father in the living room, Nancy had found that she was becoming freer with Mathews. Perhaps, she thought, it was because of her desire to punish Douglas. Shortly after that, her father had flown back to Kenya where he had to attend an important meeting with his bank's senior officials. Mathews had promised him that he would ensure she joined Harvard in a few days' time. It would all depend on when Nancy would like to resume her studies for to him it would just require a telephone call.

Nancy and Mathews had driven her father to the airport and seen him off. As they drove back home, Mathews had presented himself to Nancy as a loving person, very sociable and understanding. They had discussed many things, mostly political, and Nancy found herself contributing to and enjoying the conversation as much as was Mathews. Mathews had not mentioned anything about Douglas until they were back in the house. When he did, it was in a tactful manner that impressed Nancy. He first gauged Nancy's reaction by mentioning the issue briefly. When he established that Nancy was not reluctant to discuss it, he dwelt on it in detail, preaching to Nancy the need to take great care when engaging in love affairs with young men "as they are not trustworthy".

Mathews had then led her to his bedroom without letting her know that they were going there. She was surprised when instead of sitting on

the chairs, Mathews had sat on the bed and invited her there. That was when Mathews had began fondling her and impressing on her that he loved her. And Nancy did not fail to see the great desire in his eyes.

After making love, he to satisfy his passion and, she to hurt Douglas, they had become even freer. Now, as they walked in the orchard, they were less shy with each other.

"Forget about Joyce. She can't be a stumbling block to our happiness. I've hated her all these years," Mathews said.

"But she is your wife, Mathews, isn't she?" Nancy asked as she threw the orange peels into the orchard.

"She is my wife alright but I'll divorce her," Mathews said.

"Will you, really? Do you think it'll be easy?" Nancy asked.

"It doesn't have to be easy but I'll do it for your sake," Mathews said.

"Why do you hate Joyce, if you don't mind my asking?" Mathews gazed straight ahead and Nancy could see that his mind was far away. What she could not see was that Mathews was reminiscing his days at Harvard and how Joyce had come into his life.

"She fooled me," Mathews said after a long silence.

Nancy could discern the bitterness in his words which he vainly tried hard to suppress.

"She fooled you?" Nancy asked curiously.

Mathews was silent yet again and he drowned in a deep sea of thoughts. Nancy wondered what it was about Joyce that was making him get so bitter.

"It's a long and bitter story, Nancy. I'll tell you about it one day and you'll sympathise with me for the suffering I have gone through all these years," Mathews said.

Bitterness was still discernible in his words and Nancy knew she should not persist with the questions.

"Has Romthex approved the loan to the African Development Bank?" she asked just to change the topic.

"Yes, but it was a smaller figure than was requested," Mathews said. He remained silent for a moment before saying, "Please give me an answer Nancy. I really want to hear you say it."

"What answer?" Nancy asked looking rather confused.

"Whether or not you will marry me," Mathews said.

"It is Joyce that I fear," Nancy said.

"I'm promising you that I'll take care of her and she won't be a bother at all. I'll file a divorce suit and it'll go through within a few days. I assure you, Nancy."

"I'm not against the idea if you're sure you will take care of Joyce," Nancy said faintly.

Mathews heaved a heavy sigh of relief.

* * * * *

"Douglas Kamau," the judge called out.

"Yes your honour," Douglas said faintly from the bench where he stood accused.

"You are accused that on 20th May this year you knowingly set fire to room 106 of Hall Nine, University of Nairobi and destroyed property worth twenty thousand shilings. You are also accused of running away from the country and going to Namibia to evade the law." The judge paused and looked at Douglas. "Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty your honour," Douglas said confidently.

He was in a relaxed mood.

"Mr Prosecutor, proceed please," the judge said.

The prosecutor rose and flipped through the file which he held in his hand. Then he began to read it.

"Thank you your honour. The accused, Douglas, was until June this year a first year student of anthropology at the University of Nairobi. On the night of 20th May, this year, he poured petrol in his room at the university and deliberately set it on fire. The Vice Chancellor at first thought the fire was an accident but then Douglas went underground the following morning and could not be traced anywhere. He thus changed his mind and decided to investigate further. The investigations revealed that Douglas had set the room on fire deliberately for reasons that are still not known. However, so as not to inconvenience this court, your honour, we are to view the action as aimed at causing discontent among the students and spark off student disturbances at the university.

"The whereabouts of the accused, your honour, were not known for three weeks until it was reliably learnt a few days ago that he had fled to Windhoek in Namibia after being a stowaway on a ship. This information was given to the Kenya police by their Namibian counterparts. It was also learnt that the accused had been charged with rape in Windhoek but was acquitted when the woman he had raped pleaded with the court to forgive him. This case is serious, your honour, as the accused has contravened Chapter 5, Section 3, of the laws of this country which states that no one should knowingly destroy property either belonging to him, to a group of people, or to the government. The accused has also contravened Chapter 8, Section 25, Subsection 3, which states that no Kenyan citizen should destroy the good image of his country. The accused went around Windhoek raping women and this earned Kenya a bad name, your honour.

"In view of all this, I humbly ask this honourable court to impose on him the maximum penalty of two years for the first offence and one year for the second. This will serve as an example to others with similar thoughts. Thank you your honour."

The prosecutor sat down bowing to the judge.

Douglas' lawyer rose from his seat at the advocates' bench, holding a file in his hand and bowing to the judge.

"I beg to mitigate on behalf of my client, your honour," he said, "Permission granted," the judge said.

"I would like to put a few questions across to the court," the lawyer said and paused then he proceeded, "Mr Prosecutor, what evidence do you have to prove beyond any shadow of doubt that my client started the fire in his room?"

The prosecutor rose.

"The investigations that were carried out revealed that petrol had been poured all over the room before the fire started. Fleeing by the accused to a foreign country is also another very strong proof that he was fleeing the possible consequences of his crime," the prosecutor said.

"Can you produce in this honourable court a witness who can swear that my witness started the fire in his room?" the lawyer asked.

"We don't need a witness to prove that. The fact that petrol was poured in his room and the accused ran away from the country is more than enough evidence," the prosecutor said.

"Who poured the petrol in the room?" the lawyer asked.

"It must have been the accused as he was the occupier of the room at the time," the prosecutor said.

"Has it crossed your mind that the petrol could have been poured by another person?" the lawyer asked.

"If it was poured by someone else then the accused must have seen or heard him do it. He could also have sensed the smell of petrol and alerted the hall's custodian," the prosecutor said.

"Supposing my client was dead asleep when the petrol was being poured and he only woke up when the fire started?" the lawyer asked.

"That isn't possible," the prosecutor said.

"Can you show this honourable court that it is not possible," the judge said, scratching his beard.

"Well, in normal cases, that is not possible your honour," the prosecutor said.

"Put simply, you have no evidence to support your claim. Proceed please," the judge said as he turned to the lawyer.

"How was my client when he left the room after it was set on fire?" the lawyer asked.

The prosecutor scratched his chin.

"I don't understand your question," he said.

"What can't you understand in the question? Am I wrong to assume that you spent several years in law school and qualified to be a state counsel?" the lawyer asked.

A flicker of anger formed on the prosecutor's face.

"I beg to launch a complaint your honour. The defence lawyer has insulted me," the prosecutor said.

"No, the defence lawyer hasn't insulted you. He has only asked you whether he is wrong in assuming that you spent several years in law school and qualified to be a state counsel," the judge said.

"That is correct your honour," the defence lawyer said.

"But that isn't a relevant question in this case," the prosecutor objected.

"It's relevant as it seeks to explain why you can't understand the questions put across to you by the defence counsel," the lawyer said.

"Let's avoid a lot of complications and unnecessary wastage of time. What can't you understand in the question put across to you by the defence counsel?" the judge asked.

"He has asked me how his client was when he left the room after it was set on fire. I can't understand exactly what answer he expects from me your honour," the prosecutor said.

"I expect to be told how he was behaving and how his physical state was. How he was dressed and such other relevant matters," the lawyer said.

"I haven't gathered any information about that as I feel strongly that it is not relevant in this case," the prosecutor said.

The lawyer turned to the judge.

"Your honour, I beg to call my first witness whom I will cross examine in search of the relevant answer the prosecutor has failed to provide us," the judge said.

"Permission granted," the judge said.

"May I call upon Mr Peter Mwambia to rise up and take the oath of this honourable court," the lawyer said.

A young man of about Douglas' age came to the witness bench. The court clerk rose and took a bible from his desk. He handed it over to Mwambia who repeated the words of the oath after him.

"Proceed please," the judge said to the lawyer.

"What is your name?" the lawyer asked.

"My name is Peter Mwambia."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty years."

"Are you employed?"

"No, I am a student."

"In which college?"

"I am a student at the University of Nairobi,"

"Do you know the accused?"

"Yes, he is my friend."

"What else do you know about him?"

"His room was next to mine in Hall Nine."

"What number was your room at that time?"

"Room 105 and his was 106."

"Can you recall what happened on the night of 20th May this year?"

"I heard somebody screaming in the middle of the night and I quickly got out of bed. When I got out of the room to investigate, I saw that Douglas' room was on fire and he was screaming for help."

"How was he dressed at the time you saw him?"

"He only had his pyjamas on."

"Did he look worried?"

"He was very frightened and quite disturbed."

"Supposing he had set his room on fire, could he have looked the way he did?"

"I don't think so. He was genuinely frightened."

"So you're sure he was not pretending?"

"He wasn't pretending. His feelings appeared genuine. He has been my friend for long and I know when he is frightened."

"Objection your honour," the prosecutor said.

"Granted," the judge said.

"I object to the defence counsel trying to make the witness interpret evidence."

"I haven't tried to make the witness interpret evidence. I'm only cross examining him for information that's crucial to this case."

"I seek to agree with the defence counsel. It doesn't appear like he is trying to make the witness interpret evidence. Proceed please," the judge said.

"What happened when you saw Douglas screaming for help at your door?" the lawyer asked the witness.

"I let him into my room and gave him clothes to wear. Meanwhile, a crowd of students had gathered at the scene and were trying to put out the fire."

"Is there anything else you would like to add as your evidence in this court?"

"No," Mwambia said.

"I'm through with the cross examination, your honour," the lawyer said.

"Would you like to cross examine the witness Mr. Prosecutor?" the judge asked.

"Yes"

"Proceed, then."

"What makes you think that the accused's feelings were genuine when you saw him that night?"

"Incidentally, I'm majoring in human psychology at the university and I therefore could not have failed to read his face accurately."

The courtroom broke into loud laughter. Even Douglas smiled for the first time.

"Is this honourable court also to assume that your knowledge of human psychology helped you to make an accurate judgement that the accused wasn't pretending to be frightened?"

"Yes."

"I've no more questions, your honour," the prosecutor sat down.

"Do you have anything else in defence of your client?" the judge asked the defence.

"Yes, your honour," the lawyer said and rose from his seat.

"Proceed, please," the judge said.

"I now seek to direct a few questions at the prosecutor on the second charge facing my client. May I start by asking how it came to be concluded that my client was running away from the law when he left the country and went to Namibia."

The prosecutor rose from his seat.

"It's on record that the accused had been directed to see the Vice Chancellor of the university the morning after he burned his room. It is therefore common knowledge that he must have feared the Vice Chancellor would hand him over to the police."

"I object to the prosecutor passing judgement on my client, your honour. I humbly request you to make him withdraw the remark he has just made; that my client is guilty of burning his room even before you have passed the judgement," the lawyer said.

"I hereby rule that it is not in order for the prosecutor to refer to the accused in a manner insinuating that he is already guilty even before the court has determined the case. I therefore order the prosecutor to withdraw the said remark," the judge said.

"I hereby withdraw the offensive remark and in due respect to this honourable court, regret the injury to the accused and his counsel," the prosecutor said.

"Proceed please," the judge said to the lawyer.

"Can you adduce in this honourable court ample evidence which will bear out the claim that my client was escaping from the law."

"The evidence I have established is enough for the use of this court," the prosecutor said.

"And do you have evidence which can prove that my client behaved in a manner that demeaned the Kenyan image in Namibia?"

"I have ample evidence that he raped a woman in Windhoek."

"Can you prove to the satisfaction of this court that he committed the said offence?"

"Yes, I have documentary evidence to support my claim."

The prosecutor then fumbled in his file and produced a copy of the statement Douglas had been forced to sign by the policemen in Windhoek.

"I have a copy of the confession which the accused made at Windhoek Police Station and which he signed voluntarily. I beg to read it aloud to this courtroom, your honour."

"Permission granted," the judge said.

The prosecutor read the statement to a hushed courtroom. When he was through, a wave of murmurs swept the courtroom.

"I beg to cross examine my client at this point your honour," the lawyer said.

"Permission granted," the judge said.

Douglas began to tremble. His lawyer noticed it and remained silent for a brief moment so as to enable him regain his composure. Then he faced him when he was sure his nerves had cooled.

"Douglas, do you understand the contents of the statement that has just been read out in court?"

"Yes I do," Douglas was now relaxed and he was speaking his words without shivering, something which the lawyer had feared would happen.

Douglas on his part had not expected to panic in court and he wondered what had made him shiver when his name had been called out by his lawyer.

"Do you agree that you signed the statement,"

"Yes I do," Douglas said.

"Did you sign it of your own volition?"

"No, I didn't. I was tortured so that I could sign it."

"So you couldn't have signed it had you not been tortured?"

"No, I couldn't have signed it. I signed it to prevent my death."

"Who was torturing you?"

"Three policemen in an office at Windhoek Police Station."

"Why didn't you want to sign the statement?"

"Because it isn't true."

"Can you substantiate to this court what you mean by that?"

"Everything that is written against me in the statement is false."

"So you're very sure that you signed the statement to avoid being killed by the three policemen?"

"Yes, they could have killed me if I didn't sign it."

"How did you know that they could have killed you?"

"From the brutal torture they were subjecting me. I feared that they would kill me if I didn't sign the statement."

"Do you know one Sophie Mobesi?"

"Yes, I do. She was my neighbour in the estate I was staying. Her house was next to mine."

"Was she your friend?"

"I can't say she was an enemy."

"Have you ever made love to her since you became friends?"

"No."

"And did you rape her?"

"No, I didn't."

"And why then did she say you raped her?"

"I think she was just hysterical. She could have gone beserk."

"What did she tell the judge when she testified in the case in which you were accused of raping her in Windhoek?"

"She asked the judge to forgive me because she had forgiven me."

"Did she produce in court evidence to prove that you had raped her?"

"No, she didn't. She just told the judge to forgive me as she had done."

"And what did you feel about it?"

"About what?"

"About her having forgiven you and telling the judge to do the same?"

"I was bitter."

"Why were you bitter, rather than thankful and happy?"

"I was bitter because I didn't need any forgiveness. I wasn't guilty in the first place and it was therefore unrealistic to be forgiven. What was I being forgiven for anyway? She insinuated that I had raped her and yet I knew that I hadn't."

"And did you voice those sentiments to the judge?"

"Yes, I did."

"What was his response?"

"He said that I was stupid to turn down the forgiveness."

There was laughter in the courtroom.

"And what impression did that give you?"

"It gave me the impression that he was very subjective."

"Let's now turn to the issue of Sophie's husband. Did you stab him with a sharp knife in the arm?"

"No, I didn't."

"What about the knife that was found in your pocket at the police station full of blood?"

"It was put in my pocket by Sophie's husband without my knowledge."

"How could he have put it without your knowledge?"

"I was so confused when Sophie started screaming that I had raped her. Her husband came into the room and put something into my pocket but I was too confused to check what it was."

"So you didn't know that it was a knife he had put in your pocket until it was discovered by the policemen?"

"No, I didn't."

"And you're sure that you didn't stab Bernard on the arm?"

"Yes, I am very sure of that."

"Let's now turn to the night in question at the university. Can you describe exactly what happened please?"

"I was asleep in my room in the middle of the night when I sensed a strong smell of petrol. The smell was so strong that it choked me. I uncovered myself to find out where the smell was coming from but at that very moment I saw a lit matchstick fly into the room through the window and a big flame erupted immediately. I got out of bed and dashed to the door. I opened it quickly and jumped out. As I got out of the room, I felt that the floor was wet with petrol."

The courtroom was dead silent as Douglas recounted the scene.

"How did you manage to get out of the room so quickly?"

"I always leave the key in the key hole and so I just jumped to the door and unlocked it."

"Was any of your property burned in the room?"

"Yes. Everything that was in the room was burned down."

"Including all your clothes and academic stationary?"

"Yes"

"So you say you aren't the one who started the fire?"

"I didn't."

"Supposing you're the one who had started the fire, would you have first removed your property to avoid it being destroyed?" The court burst into a loud peal of laughter.

"Yes, I could have done that."

"I object to the defence counsel interpreting evidence and putting words in the accused's mouth, your honour," the prosecutor complained.

"The defence counsel is only cross examining the accused. I'm not of the view that he is interpreting evidence or putting words in the accused's mouth," the judge said.

"Why did you leave Kenya to go to Namibia?"

"I felt that my life was in danger, in Kenya."

"Can you please substantiate to the court what you mean."

"I felt that somebody had tried to kill me by setting my room on fire."

"So you suspected that somebody had started the fire in your room to deliberately kill you?"

"Yes, because I saw the lit match fly into my room through the window. I also believe that the same person who threw the match was

the one who had poured the petrol through the window when I was asleep," Douglas said.

"How could he have opened the window?" the lawyer asked.

"I used to leave the window slightly open when retiring to bed so as to give the room more fresh air. The person could have climbed up a tree which was near the window and gone to the balcony since my room was just on the first floor. He could have poured petrol into the room while standing at the balcony."

"So that explains how the petrol was poured into your room?"

"Yes, it does."

"Is it therefore your submission that you left Kenya for Namibia due to your own security and not to run away from the law as alleged?"

"Yes."

"In a nutshell, you are saying that you're innocent of all the charges against you?"

"Yes. I consider myself innocent," Douglas said.

The courtroom resounded with laughter.

"I've no more questions to put across to my client your honour," the lawyer said.

"Does the prosecutor have any questions for the accused?" the judge asked. The prosecutor rose and faced the judge.

"Yes, I would like to ask him a few questions."

"Proceed please."

"I would like to turn your attention to the statement that you signed in Windhoek and which I earlier read out to the court. Can you prove that you were really tortured to sign it?"

"Yes I can, by presenting myself to a qualified medical practitioner who will carry out tests on my body to verify that I was tortured."

"Let's now shift to the issue of the knife. How can you prove to this court that the knife was planted in your pocket by Bernard?"

"I have no evidence other than my word to prove it," Douglas said.

"Why did Bernard plant the knife in your pocket?" the prosecutor asked.

"To make it seem like I had stabbed him."

"Can you account for the bleeding of his arm?"

"I don't understand your question."

"I'm asking how his arm could have bled if you hadn't stabbed him."

"He could have hidden animal blood under his shirt sleeve and then spilled it to wet his shin after planting the knife in my pocket."

"Can you produce evidence to prove that theory?"

"I don't have any other evidence apart from my word."

"How can we tell that you are not telling lies?"

"I'm talking the truth before God," Douglas said and there were murmurs in the court room.

"I have no more questions, your honour," the prosecutor said and sat down.

"Does the defence counsel wish to make his final submissions before judgement is delivered?" the judge asked.

The lawyer rose from his seat.

"Yes your honour," the lawyer said.

"Proceed, please."

"From the evidence adduced in this court, both by the prosecution and the defence, it is apparent that my client is just a victim of injustice. There is no evidence whatsoever that justly implicates him on any of the two charges brought against him. The prosecution has desperately failed to prove to this court that the accused actually set his room at the University of Nairobi on fire. The prosecution has also desperately failed to prove to this court that my client behaved in a manner that demeaned Kenya's image in Namibia. The claim that he raped a woman in Windhoek is hearsay and it has no legal standing in this court. It should therefore be dismissed with the contempt it deserves. The statement which the prosecution has proudly read out in this courtroom is fictitious and my client was forced to sign under severe torture, that even is in total contravention of the international charter on human rights to which Kenya and Namibia are signatories. I submit before this honourable court that the basic rights of my client were violated by this torture.

"I urge the court not to take part in the miscarriage of justice which the prosecution is advocating and acquit my client and order that he be paid for all the damages he has incurred and for the disrepute he has been subjected to."

The lawyer then sat down. There was loud thumping of feet and loud murmurs.

"Does the prosecutor have anything to say before judgement is passed?" the judge asked.

"No your honour." the prosecutor said.

"The court will then adjourn for 30 minutes and resume at 11 am when judgement will be delivered," the judge said

Douglas felt the policeman who sat next to him get hold of his hands firmly and push him along the corridor leading from the courtroom. He managed to throw one glance at the people as they left the courtroom before he was dragged away to the basement cells.

* * * * *

Ten minutes after Douglas was pushed into his cell and the door locked, the same policemen who had locked it opened it. Douglas' heart missed a beat as he thought that the policemen had come to take him back to the courtroom for the judgement, but that was not the case. When the door opened, his mother, Nathaniel, his lawyer, Mwambia and a group of other friends from the university got in.

Douglas' mother walked to her son and embraced him. Douglas felt tears flow down her cheeks as she cried. He knew they were tears of agony and he felt guilty for that. Were it not for him, he thought, his mother would not be crying now.

"Stop crying for me mother, tears won't make things any better," Douglas told her when she stopped embracing him and looked at him in the eyes. Douglas saw the agony in her face and he felt tears almost gushing out of his eyes. He saw in her eyes an accusation and knew that if his mother was to be frank with him, she would say I told you to forget Nancy but you ignored my advice. Had you heeded it you would not be in this trouble now.

Douglas recalled the tears his mother had shed that day as she told him to forget about Nancy. The words she had said amid tears came back vividly in his mind; live long and find another Nancy my son.

A Nancy who will not cause your destruction. Please, my son do not allow them to destroy you... His mother's accusing eyes made Douglas' heart strong. It made his will to live even stronger. The eyes dispelled the feeling of desperation which had been enveloping him all along. He did not believe that he had to denounce Nancy to continue living; for he had decided nothing could kill his love for her. Nancy could hate him with all her heart but he would not hate her. He could not blame her for hating him because she had a good reason to do so. But he did not have any reason to hate her.

What Douglas knew he must not do was to let his enemies destroy him. He would live long and be strong. He would never succumb to despair regardless of the suffering he went through. Yes, his mother had told him so and he would live it to his death.

"My son do not allow them to destroy you," she had said

"Are they torturing you, my son?" his mother asked.

Douglas saw the agony and sympathy in her eyes and he knew that he must not tell her the truth. The truth would break her heart and make her burst into more agonising tears. He knew he must not tell her about the brutal torture he was being subjected to by the police.

"No, they aren't torturing me mother," he said faintly.

"You answered the court questions pretty well Douglas. We may have won the case," the lawyer said as he gave him a packet of milk.

"Take that, I know you must be very hungry."

"Thank you very much," Douglas said as he took the milk.

"Take everything easy Douglas. All will be well," Nathaniel said.

Douglas cut off the edge of the packet with his teeth and began to sip the milk. At least, he was now feeling like a human being again. The confidence of being part of God's creation had come back to him. As he drank the milk, Douglas thought about Nathaniel and wondered what he would do to reward him for his goodness. Douglas was by then very sure that Nathaniel was a very unique man. He had never imagined that a rich man of Nathaniel's calibre could ever show genuine love to a poor man like him. Nathaniel had been very good to him.

Douglas recalled his tribulations in Windhoek. He recalled how he had been tortured and forced to sign a statement before being given

tattered uniform and finally being hauled into a stinking cell. He recalled how desperate he had felt when he was taken to the Windhoek law courts the following day.

Douglas had been confident as he stood before the judge. He had decided from deep within him that he would only speak the truth that he had never raped anyone in his life. That was exactly what he had told the judge after which Sophie was invited to give her evidence. Sophie refused to testify, saying that she had forgiven Douglas and that the judge should also do the same. Douglas had seen the guilt in Sophie's eyes as she faced him. It was the guilt of betrayal. Sophie was being haunted by the betrayal she had made to someone who had been a good friend. Douglas knew that he could not take her forgiveness. He knew that acknowledging the forgiveness would only send the message that it was true he had raped her yet he had not. So Douglas had just told the judge without a trace of remorse that he did not need any forgiveness as this would imply he was guilty.

Douglas was later acquitted for lack of evidence and his next destination was the Windhoek Airport. He was quickly hauled into a waiting Kenya Airways Boeing 747 and deported to Nairobi.

* * * * *

On arrival at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, he immediately got into the hands of the waiting police officers and was led to a waiting police van. He was driven to the Central Police Station in Nairobi. He was beaten up brutally by the two police officers as he was hauled out of the police van and was immediately led to the commandant's office.

The commandant had told him to sit on a chair opposite him at his desk, ready for interview him. However a police officer had come to the office to tell the commandant that he was needed urgently at one of the cells where two prisoners were fighting. The commandant had thrown a glance at Douglas, hesitated as if trying to think whether to go or not, and then finally rose from his seat. He closed the door behind him and locked it to prevent Douglas from escaping.

Douglas' mind rushed to the telephone on the commandant's table. Could he not use it to call Nathaniel and inform him that he was at the Central Police Station? He knew that the cells were a good distance away and it would take the commandant some time before coming back. Without wasting much time Douglas quickly rose from the seat and grabbed the telephone receiver.

He was very lucky the telephone line at Nation House was not engaged and Nathaniel came on line immediately. Douglas told him briefly that he was being held at the Central Police station and then he replaced the receiver. Nathaniel had promised to come and see him at the station immediately.

The commandant returned to the office about 15 minutes later and sat at the desk.

"It appears that you are a mafia-like criminal, Douglas," he said. "May I warn you sternly for your own good before we discuss anything further," the commandant said as Douglas listened keenly. "If you don't want to die, don't make the mistake of mentioning Professor Waihenya and Nancy in court. You know already what has happened to you and you know why it has happened. I think you have some brains to know what will happen if you don't heed my warning and you know exactly who will make it happen. Have you got that or are you just gazing at me like a robot?"

"I've got it right," Douglas said faintly.

"As I've said I'm sure by now you already know what will befall you if you disobey my advice," the commandant said as Douglas remained silent.

"You're going to appear in court tomorrow morning to answer two charges; one of setting fire to your room at the University of Nairobi and the other of damaging Kenya's good image in Namibia by going around Windhoek raping women," the commandant said.

Douglas remained silent. The commandant pressed the intercom and requested a police officer to be sent to his office. A few minutes later a police officer entered and he was ordered to take Douglas to a cell.

Nathaniel arrived at the police station when Douglas had already been taken to the cell. He was not alone. He came with a young man whom he introduced to Douglas as William Mwangi, a lawyer who was going to take care of his defence. Nathaniel and the lawyer had already been told by the commandant what charges were being preferred against Douglas.

In the privacy of the cell, Douglas narrated to the lawyer and Nathaniel all that had happened in Windhoek. He told them how he and Nancy had come to be lovers and everything else that had happened since Nancy's trip to America. Finally, Douglas told them of the commandant's threat.

After a lengthy discussion the lawyer, Nathaniel and Douglas decided that it would be wise not to take the commandant's threat lightly as experience had shown that Edward was a ruthless man who could carry out his threats. Edward would undoubtedly harm Douglas if he spoke the truth about him and the American tycoon in relation to Nancy. They agreed that Douglas should speak the whole truth, save for the information concerning the three. He was not at all to mention that he had a girlfriend by the name Nancy.

Nathaniel had then gone to Witeithie to inform Douglas' mother of her son's fate. As if paying the lawyer for the services he was to offer was not enough generosity, Nathaniel offered to collect Douglas' mother on the day of the case. What a good man Nathaniel was, Douglas thought as he faced him straight in the face. Aloud he asked, "Do you think they will jail me?"

The lawyer scratched his beard and smiled at Douglas.

"We must be confident that we have won the case," he said.

"I don't fear being taken to prison though. They have already tortured me more than I can ever be tortured in a lifetime," Douglas said.

"Be confident of victory, Douglas," Nathaniel said.

Ten minutes later a policeman came to the cell and ordered the visitors to get out. Douglas was then led to the courtroom for the final phase of the judgement.

"Does the accused have anything to tell the court before I read out my judgement?" the judge asked when the courtroom was calm.

"Yes, your honour," Douglas said faintly.

He had not planned to say anything.

In fact, he had not known that the judge would call him to address the court. But now that he had a chance he felt a strong urge speak. He badly wanted to speak out his mind. It was only by saying what was simmering from deep within him that he would satisfy his heart.

"Proceed please." All the eyes in the courtroom glared at Douglas.

"Your honour, I'll start by thanking you for giving me this chance to say what is in my heart. I'm a victim of evil forces that are untouchable by human laws. I want to state clearly that I've never contemplated breaking any of our laws and that branding me a criminal is unjust. I consider myself innocent. I want to state clearly before this honourable court that I don't care what judgement is passed on me for the said offences. I don't recognise any judgements passed by human beings whether positive or negative. That is all I would like to say your honour," Douglas then sat down.

All eyes now turned to the judge who was beginning to put on his glasses, ready to read out his judgement.

The judge read his ruling for about 15 minutes. It was so full of legal jargon that most of it did not make any sense to Douglas. What made sense to him but did not make him feel like a law student in a lecture theatre was the last part. The part consisted of only two sentences and the judge looked straight into Douglas' eyes as he read it.

"Therefore, this court finds you, Douglas Kamau, not guilty of the first charge of setting your university room on fire but finds you guilty of damaging the image of Kenya in Namibia by raping one Sophie Mobesi. The court therefore rules that you serve a one-year jail term in Lang'ata prison."

Before the judge had even folded his file, the policeman who sat beside Douglas had already grabbed his hand, ready to lead him out of the courtroom. Douglas looked round the courtroom and waved at the people. He managed to see his mother sobbing uncontrollably before the policeman shouted in his ear, for him to move and shoved him forward.

Chapter Sixteen

Mathews was not aware of Joyce's early return from Paris. She had not telephoned him to say she would be returning before the end of the conference. All he saw was a plane land at the compound's airstrip and Joyce walk down the stairs, her handbag firm in her hand.

Mathews was playing badminton with Nancy at a pitch which was a short distance from the tarmacked runway. When he saw Joyce walk down the plane's steps, his heart immediately skipped a beat and he said to Nancy as sweat began to form on his face, "My wife is back."

Nancy had seen the plane touch down at the airstrip and she had seen Joyce walk out. Her heart too had missed a beat. The guilty are afraid. She was guilty of having a love affair with Mathews while Mathews was guilty of engaging in a love affair with her yet he was married. They were both afraid when they saw Joyce; the woman they knew they had wronged. Without speaking out their minds, they decided to pretend they had not seen her and continued playing the game.

Joyce had seen them long before getting out of the plane and so their pretence could not be of any help. She walked straight to the badminton pitch and stood a few yards from her husband, who until then had not turned his head in her direction.

"What do you hope to gain by pretending that you haven't seen me?" Joyce shouted.

Mathews turned and put up a facial expression which indicated that he was seeing Joyce for the first time. Nancy too looked at her. Her face was pale and one could tell the hate and anger that burned within her. Had she known what she and Mathews had done in her absence? Nancy wondered and a cold chill ran down her spine. Cold drops of sweat began to form all over her face and she felt her knees begin to buckle.

"Why should I pretend that I haven't seen you?" Mathews asked.

"That is what I'm wondering," Joyce said.

"And what makes you think that is what I'm doing?"

"Do you think I have the brains of two year old kid?"

"Could be," Mathews said and immediately regretted saying that.

He had spoken the words which had come to his mouth without giving them much thought.

"So that is what you have been taking me for?" Joyce shouted. "That is why you've been sleeping around with black bitch from Africa thinking that I wouldn't know?"

Joyce shot a fierce look at Nancy as she said this.

Nancy saw the hate and bitterness in her eyes and she turned her eyes away so as not to see more.

"Mind your words woman. What do you think you're saying?" Mathews shouted.

"Haven't you been making love to that black thing for three days in our bed?" Joyce shouted. "You think I'm a kid not to know?"

"Do you mind me telling you some truth, Joyce?" Mathews asked.

"What truth?"

"That I've already instructed my lawyers to file a divorce suit."

"A divorce suit? A divorce suit for what?" Joyce shouted, visibly surprised.

Mathews' words had caught her off guard.

"I must be separated from you. You cheated me into marrying you when we were at Harvard. I didn't know that I was marrying a barren bitch who wasn't any different from a street whore," Mathews said as anger welled up in him.

Joyce began to cry. Then, without saying a word, she walked away towards the house, wiping her tears as she went.

"How did she know?" Nancy asked when Joyce had disappeared. She was worried and it showed on her face. Mathews saw the fear written on her face and he smiled wryly to ease her tension. But the truth was that he too was worried. He was worried at the unfolding events but he could not show it to Nancy. As a man, he had to show courage even when fear filled him.

"Someone told her and I know exactly who did it," Mathews said.

"Who did it, Mathews?" Nancy asked, her face simmering with curiosity.

It was not just curiosity that showed on her face but also a strong hate for Joyce. She had never hated Joyce but now she hated her more

than she hated anybody else. The one sentence that had suddenly made Nancy hate Joyce rang in her mind in clear vividness, "That is why you have been sleeping around with black bitch from Africa thinking that I wouldn't know?"

Nancy wanted to brush the words from her mind and assume they had not been spoken but they could not go away. Without knowing it, tears began to stream down her cheeks. Mathews saw them and he held her hand.

"What is it Nancy? Take everything easy. I'll handle it," he said.

"So she's a racist?" Nancy asked as she fought back the tears.

"Forget her, Nancy. Most Americans are racists," Mathews said.

"Why do whites hate blacks?"

"I don't hate blacks myself," Mathews said. "Not all whites hate blacks."

"But why do those who hate them do so? I've never thought that it was a reality. I thought racism was just a myth," Nancy said.

"Don't take these things so seriously. They do happen at times and we can't prevent them. It may take long to erase the racist psychology from people," Mathews said, looking straight at Nancy.

"I now hate Joyce more than I have ever hated anyone and I'll never like her. Nothing is so hurting as to be insulted in your race. I feel dehumanised by her remarks. Is this really what happens in America? So it is true what I read in the newspapers in Kenya about black people being dehumanised by white people? Why have you allowed racism to thrive? Why don't you heal this deadly cancer?" Nancy asked in an emotional voice.

Mathews gazed at her and what he saw was what he had seen a million times in faces of black people in America; the strong feeling of hate for the white people who were perceived as the aggressors and treated with great contempt. He saw a strong feeling of vengeance craving to avenge the hurt feeling and as he held Nancy's hand, a vivid reminiscence of his childhood came to mind.

Mathews recalled how black children had bullied and teased him when he joined a predominantly black school in Harlem. He recalled how he had been assimilated into the black community and his

psychology tuned to think and behave like a black man. He recalled how he had come to share the black children's hate for white people and how the black children had elected him as class monitor despite him being white. He recalled his mother's love affair with Ted Dinkins, a black man, and how the racist whites had killed both of them for this. He recalled too how another black man, Brian Jackson, had taken care of him after his mother's death until he was able to care for himself after graduating from Harvard.

This reminiscence made Mathews sad. It brought back the realities he hated to remember. As he had worked his way up the ladder of success and as he had established his multi-million dollar empire, he had strived to successfully avoid being a racist. There were times he felt tempted to hate white people and wish they could be wiped off the face of the earth. However, he had managed to restrain himself.

"Take it easy Nancy. You don't have to think much about what Joyce said. I know it hurts but please let it be a passing cloud," Mathews pleaded.

"What will she do now?" Nancy asked anxiously.

"It doesn't matter what she does. What matters is what I do. I've already instructed my lawyers to file a divorce suit."

"But you haven't told me who told her what we have been doing in her absence," Nancy said.

"It must be her sister. She must have telephoned her in Paris. That is why she has come early before the conference ended. She is a crazy one. Crazy indeed."

"So it is Agnes who told her?" Nancy asked.

She recalled that Agnes had seen Mathews take her to his bedroom three days ago. She must also have noticed that Mathews had a romantic attachment towards her all through, Nancy thought. Nancy also recalled that from that incident onwards, Agnes had been cold towards her.

"Yes, she's the one and this will be her last day in this compound," Mathews said.

"But you've hurt Joyce, Mathews. You've called her a barren bitch and a whore. You shouldn't have used those words," Nancy said.

"She shouldn't have called you a black bitch from Africa," Mathews said.

Nancy saw the sense in his words but she still sympathised with Joyce. She could not help imagining what she could have felt if she had been the one who had been insulted. Nancy was not used to insults and she could not remember any time she had insulted anyone, even when people had hurt her feelings deliberately. That was why she was always so sensitive.

"What has she gone to do in the house?" Nancy asked.

"Let us play another round and I'll go and talk to her. She will have cooled down by then," Mathews said.

* * * * *

When Joyce left the badminton pitch, she went straight to their bedroom and cried even more. She cried as she lay on the bed, face down, and she wiped the tears using the bedsheets. As a river of tears flowed out from her already paining eyes, her memory raced back to the days in Harvard. She remembered how pure she had been when she joined the university. She remembered how she had vowed to retain her purity and dignity as a woman by avoiding love affairs before marriage.

More tears streamed down her cheeks as she remembered how Harvard life had overwhelmed her and led her astray, resulting in the destruction of her uterus. And now Mathews had reminded her bluntly that she was barren and worse still he had called her a street whore! It was true that she was barren but the reminder and the insult galled her. Throughout the years, she had managed to chain Mathews to her to ensure that he never thought of marrying another woman. But now things were different. She had noticed Mathews admiring Nancy during their first visit but she had flushed out the thought from her mind, convinced that she was wrong. Even when Agnes had telephoned her in Paris to tell her of what Mathews was doing with Nancy in her absence, she had not believed her. She had taken the plane to Atlanta hoping Agnes was wrong.

Now she had established beyond doubt that Agnes was right. She had caught Mathews and Nancy red handed playing badminton in a manner which suggested they were more than just friends. Then Mathews had talked of a divorce! He had said that he had already instructed his lawyers to file for divorce. Joyce had lived with Mathews long enough to know that he meant what he said. She knew Mathews too well to know that he was a man who could stop at nothing to get whatever he wanted. Indeed, Joyce knew that Mathews would go ahead with the divorce proceedings.

Joyce knew also that a divorce suit would portray her stigma to the whole world. It would expose her closely guarded secret that she was not the real mother of the children she and Mathews had cheated the world were theirs by blood. The two children they had adopted when the truth dawned on Mathews that she could not conceive a baby. Joyce could not stand the humiliation. It would be like being stripped naked for the whole world to see. She would be scorned by both her enemies and those who held her in reverence.

Joyce could not stand that. She could not bear the pain of being crucified in public and therefore had to do something fast. As she shed more tears and wet the bedsheets, she decided exactly what she would do. She did not need to think twice about it.

She rose from the bed and moved to the door. She locked it well and threw the keys on the bed. She opened the suitcase that was on a chest of drawers and removed all the dresses which had belts round the waist. She removed ten belts and quickly began to tie them one after another to form a long string. She made a noose and turned to face the ceiling. There was a mettalic bulb hook on the ceiling directly above her. She held the edge of the table that was next to the bed and pulled it along the floor until it was directly below the bulb hook.

Then she stepped on the table and tied the end of the rope to the hook. She then fitted her head into the noose and tightened it at the neck. A quick jump from the table did it.

* * * * *

Mathews and Nancy played another round. Then, a few minutes later, they left the pitch and went to the house. Mathews hoped that by then Joyce would have cooled down.

He went to the living room and when he did not find Joyce there, he knew that she must be in the bedroom. He proceeded there. The bedroom's door was locked. He pushed it but it could not open. He realised that it was locked. What was Joyce doing that had made her lock the door? Mathews then knocked twice and waited. There was no response. Joyce must be fuming at me, he thought.

"Joyce. Joyce, open up the door," Mathews called.

There was no response.

"Don't be crazy, Joyce. You won't gain a thing by locking yourself in. We should talk and sort out things."

Still there was no response.

"Joyce! Joyce!"

Mathews was beginning to get angry now. He banged the door harder with his clenched fist but nothing happened. He banged again four times and waited. Still there was no response, "Don't be crazy Joyce, what do you think you're doing?"

He waited for a few seconds and when she didn't open, he banged the door hard six times. When no response was forthcoming, his head began to vibrate with anger.

Mathews could have kicked the door open but he did not have the energy. The only alternative now was to get a spare key and open the door. Joyce had locked the door with his keys which he had left at the door. The only spare key was with Agnes. That bitch, she had brought this whole mess! Mathews cursed as Agnes came into his mind. He had a strong urge to spit in her face and tell her that she was damn stupid but another thought told him that it was not wise to do so. She had gone to visit a friend a few hours earlier and Mathews did not know when she would return. The bitch! Mathews cursed. His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps. A few seconds later, Agnes and Nancy appeared. He could see that both had curious looks.

"What is wrong, Mathews? Why are you banging the door?" Agnes asked.

You're a stupid good for nothing bitch! Mathews thought, you caused all this by ringing Joyce to tell her useless gossip. You have made her mad at me until she won't open the door.

Aloud he said, "Joyce has refused to open the door for me. I wonder what the hell is wrong with her."

Agnes was looking straight at Mathews as he spoke. She moved closer to the door, held the handle and turned it but it did not open.

"Joyce," she called out, "open the door."

There was no response. Not a single sound came from the room.

"Joyce please open the door. Whatever problem there is will be solved. Just open the door and make things easier for us."

Mathews wanted to tell Agnes that she could have made things easier by not poking her nose in his affairs and inflating his telephone bill. However, he knew that he should not tell her so on the face. What he could not avoid was hating her.

"What is wrong with her? Why is she not opening the door?" Agnes asked anxiously.

Crazy bitch! How I wish you had not been born, Mathews thought bitterly.

He said, "Do you still have the spare key which you keep for the room?"

"I think I still have it," Agnes said.

She opened her handbag which she held in her left hand and produced a bunch of keys. She selected one, inserted and turned it in the lock. Mathews was burning with impatience as he pushed open the door and strode in.

What Mathews saw made him stand transfixed. Agnes who was closely behind him, also saw the scene and let out a wail. Nancy too could not stifle a scream.

"Joyce!" Agnes exclaimed as tears rushed down her cheeks. Mathews was dazed. He just stood there staring at the dangling body of Joyce and was too confused to say anything.

There came the sound of thumping feet and seconds later the family doctor appeared.

"What's the matter?" he asked curiously.

He had heard Agnes' screams from his house and had quickly dashed out.

The doctor pushed his way in through the door and stopped in his tracks when he saw the body. Mathews was still gazing at Joyce's body while Nancy stood behind him, confusion showing on her face.

"What happened?" the doctor asked, looking at no one in particular. Mathews stopped gazing at the body and turned to the doctor.

"I don't know. . ." he stuttered.

"What exactly happened?" the doctor asked again.

He did not know what to do at first but after a few minutes he recovered and rushed to the bedside telephone. Quickly he dialled a five digit number, issued a stream of orders and then banged the receiver. Then he turned to Mathews who was still transfixed on the same spot.

"Come over here, please," the doctor told Mathews.

Mathews moved a step forward and the doctor climbed on-top of the table which Joyce had used to reach the ceiling.

"Hold her as I cut the rope," the doctor said as he removed a pocket knife.

He cut the belts and held Joyce' body by the hands. Mathews held her by the legs and supported her as she broke loose from the belt.

The doctor jumped from the table and held her. He felt her pulse when the body at last lay on the floor. Then he turned to look at Mathews who stood confused.

"We can't do anything to save her," the doctor said with a slight sigh.

* * * * *

News that Mathews' wife had committed suicide shocked America, but news that he was going to marry a black girl from Africa was even more shocking.

Americans had followed the unfolding events with meticulous scrutiny. Everything was strange, for nothing of its kind had happened recently. News that Joyce had committed suicide caught everyone by surprise and the only question that formed in their mind was, Why?

Mathews had tried his best to cover up the real cause of Joyce's suicide but in vain. He would have liked to convince the whole world that the reasons for his wife committing suicide were mysterious but Agnes shattered his attempts.

When she regained consciousness at Atlanta General Hospital where Mathews' family doctor had rushed her, a team of journalists had already got wind of the happenings and were already waiting to interview her. Agnes, amid a stream of tears, narrated to the journalists how Nancy had come to live in Mathews' home and how he had been involved in a love affair with her. She told them how she had rang Joyce in Paris to tell her about what Mathews was doing in her absence, of how Joyce had hastily left Paris and returned to America before the conference ended only to commit suicide on arrival.

The following morning the story was splashed on the front pages of many newspapers. It was written in all sorts of racial overtones. The *New York Times* headline shouted, 'AMERICAN TYCOON IN LOVE WITH A NIGGER' and the *Atlanta Times*: 'MATHEWS' WIFE KILLS SELF OVER BLACK GIRL AFFAIR.' As for the *Washington Post*, it was most satirical, 'FOR MATHEWS, BLACK IS BEAUTY.'

The reaction of Americans was spontaneous. Encouraged by the sensational treatment in the media, the racial nerves of the white community were aroused. The case set in motion a racial debate which raged in schools, in public places, in the streets and virtually everywhere. The conclusion that the whites made was that Nancy was the cause of Joyce's death.

Mathews knew that the situation required tactful handling. He resolved not to hide anything as doing so would only heighten the tension. He addressed a press conference and confessed all that had happened. If anybody cared to be rational, he thought, then he would know that neither he nor Nancy was responsible for the death. It was simply caused by Joyce's inability to reason and face a problem squarely.

But Americans did not see the case in this perspective. Their racial nerves went even more wild when Mathews said he would marry Nancy. The thought of a successful American who was supposed to be a role model falling in love with a black girl was sad news for the white community. That he was going to marry her was even worse.

Most people thought that Mathews was just joking. However, when he announced the date for the marriage, cynics were caught off guard

and they had to accept the bitter reality; the sacrilege. Meanwhile, the black community celebrated what it described as a victory. It saw Mathews' action as symbolising the fulfilment of Martin Luther King's dream of a day when racism would be a thing of the past; a day when people would be judged, not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character. They saw Mathews as a symbol ushering the dawn of a new era, an era of inter-racial tolerance devoid of all vestiges of racial bias and prejudices. It was this that they considered a victory as it signified the beginning of a new era in America, a dawn which they had been craving for since the turbulent days of slavery. Thus as the whites mourned, the blacks celebrated and wished Nancy and Mathews a successful marriage.

Throughout her life, Nancy had never imagined that she could at any time be a public figure. She had never imagined she could be the subject of national and international controversy. The present case where the whole world viewed the decision to marry her with different reactions was one thing she had never imagined; indeed she hated publicity.

Nancy was many things to many people and it all depended on who was giving the verdict. To the white Americans she was the villain. She was described in all sorts of negative adjectives most of which had no bearing to the truth. Some newspapers termed her a gold digger and said she was only interested in wealth and influence. Others described her as a former Miss Kenya who was well known for having gone in and out of every bedroom in Nairobi. Indeed, they wanted to mould only one image of Nancy; that of a black harlot.

To the black Americans however, Nancy was a hero. She was the pacesetter who stood to open the eyes of the Americans to the ideal life they ought to live; a life free of racial prejudice. Her rise to be the wife of one of the most successful Americans was seen as symbolising victory for the black people as it showed that blacks too were capable of great achievements. The black owned media popularised this image of a heroin.

Nancy, as she was being mystified in the media, was still immersed in ambivalence. On one hand she almost believed she was guilty for

Joyce's death. On the other hand, she felt that she was innocent and that she was being scorned and abused just because she was a black. She wanted to go ahead with the marriage even more so as revenge on an unjust society.

Nancy had been totally confused at first. When Joyce had committed suicide she had felt so guilty that she had subconsciously accepted the label of a murderer. Her conscience had told her that she was the cause and the ensuing psychological torment afforded her no rest. She had told Mathews then, that it was not wise for her to get married to him as this would create a stigma which would be hard to erase. She badly wanted to fly back to Kenya and forget the whole thing. But Mathews made her change her mind by impressing on her that contrary to her belief, she was innocent. He told her that there was no speck of guilt in her as she had not uttered a single word against Joyce when the latter had unleashed a stream of embarrassing insults at her while they were on the badminton pitch.

When Nancy recalled that moment she felt sad and a feeling of innocence began to erode the guilt that had formed in her. Joyce had dehumanised her just because she was a black but she had not uttered a single word to counter attack. unconsciously, a subtle quest for vengeance began to form in her too.

By the time of Joyce's burial, which she attended, Nancy began to take control of herself. If there was a speck of guilt still left in her, it was suddenly eroded by the racial tension which culminated into violence at the funeral. It had all been triggered by a group of white youths wearing Ku Klux Klan hoods and who unleashed violence on all the blacks at the funeral. What ensued was a skirmish between the whites and the blacks and the situation was only brought to a halt by the police who came in time to quell the violence. During the mayhem a shot was fired at Nancy and Mathews but it did not hit any of them.

Nancy was greatly shaken. But nonetheless the feeling of guilt had completely died and a strong quest for revenge had replaced it. Nancy had never been a racist. In fact, she had never known what the term meant in practice as she had only been reading about it in newspapers as she had never encountered it in Kenya. She had always found it unbelievable that race could be used as a measure of one's worth and

personally had never harboured any special attachment bordering on ethnocentrism. She had always considered all human beings as being equal.

This philosophy, however, was now quashed by the racial violence sparked off by the Ku Klux Klan. She was perturbed by the fact that the reason for the violence was that Mathews wanted to marry her; a black girl from Africa. She felt a strong craving for vengeance creep up in her.

She craved to avenge the suffering of the black people, and she knew that she was not just the victim. Rather, she was a member of an aggrieved community. She felt an urge to hit back hard at the inhuman American society. Yes, she must be race conscious and identify with the black people.

Soon, Nancy's ambivalence ebbed away and she stopped considering herself an offender. Rather, she saw herself as the victim and she knew she had to land a lethal blow on the enemy.

That night, as she lay in bed with Mathews in Atlanta, she said in an emotional tone, "I long for the day we shall be declared husband and wife, darling."

"Just be patient dear, we have just fifteen more days to wait," Mathews said.

"That day will prove the racists wrong," Nancy said as Mathews began to caress her breasts.

When she said those words, Nancy saw a vivid picture of Douglas which came to her mind suddenly. You betrayed me Douglas. Why did you do it? I loved you with all my heart and I still love you, Nancy thought from the secret depth of her heart. Before she realised it, a stream of tears began to wet the pillow.

"Why are you crying, dear Nancy?" Mathews asked as her tears fell on his palm.

It was only then that Nancy realised what was happening deep within her; she was crying because of her love for Douglas.

Chapter Seventeen

"Douglas! Douglas! ... What is it Douglas? How are you feeling? Come on relax and tell me what is wrong." These words were spoken by Kenneth Mamba, Douglas' cell mate at Langata Prison.

Douglas lay on his tattered blanket, face down on the rugged copy of *Daily News* which he had been reading. He was breathing heavily and sweating profusely, so much so that the tattered prison shirt which he wore was wet all over.

Kenneth was surprised at the strange turn of events. To him, everything that was happening was strange and remote from reality. They had been working all day, clearing a bush a few kilometres from the prison and to him Douglas had seemed in sound health. He had shown no torment of mind at all and the day had ended well, with all prisoners returning to their cells after eating their supper in the dining hall.

When the guard had locked their cell and walked away, Douglas had quickly fished out a rugged copy of the *Daily News* he had tucked inside his shorts. He had quickly flipped through the pages and began to read meticulously. Then, after a few minutes, Kenneth had seen him begin to breathe heavily. Before Kenneth had reached out to find out what was wrong, Douglas had fallen face down on the floor, his face resting on the newspaper.

Currently, Kenneth was fanning him with the newspaper to make his body cool down and stop sweating. Douglas was still breathing heavily but he was conscious, although he did not utter a single word. Kenneth pulled him up and sat him on the floor. It was then that he saw the tears running down Douglas' eyes. Why was he crying? Kenneth wondered. He only unbuttoned Douglas' shirt and removed it. It was wet all over and he placed it on the floor and continued fanning him.

After about ten minutes, Douglas' breathing became normal. Kenneth rubbed his face and the whole body with the shirt to remove the sweat and continued fanning him for a few more minutes.

"Are you alright?" Kenneth asked.

"Yes, I am," Douglas said faintly, opening his lips just slightly.

"Are you sure you are feeling well?"

"Don't worry about me, Kenneth. You really don't have to."

"It's rather natural that I worry about you Douglas. You're my cell mate and I'm the nearest friend around. I'm concerned about your problems. Just tell me how you're feeling. You look shocked."

"It's true I am shocked," Douglas said.

"Something seems to be disturbing you. What is it?"

"It's what I've read that has shocked me. I wish it was a lie."

"Where did you get the newspaper? What have you read in it that has made you get such a terrible shock?" Kenneth asked in a concerned tone.

"Somebody gave it to me as we were going to clear the forest."

"And what have you read in the newspaper?"

"Can you read page two," Douglas said and passed the paper to Kenneth who hurriedly flipped through the pages.

He first saw the picture of an American tycoon, Roger Mathews, kissing a beautiful black girl. Then he read the headlines 'MATHEWS MARRIES KENYAN GIRL'.

"I can't see anything shocking on this page," Kenneth said finally. "Just what is it."

"It's a long story, Kenneth. The world has been cheated, that man has hoodwinked the world but he can't hoodwink God," Douglas said.

"What exactly do you mean? Are you referring to Mathews' marriage?" Kenneth asked.

"Yes it's a long story which I have never told you, Kenneth. I must tell it to you now that I am bitter."

"What is it?" Kenneth asked anxiously.

"Do you see that girl who is being kissed by Mathews in that photograph?" Douglas asked.

Kenneth shot a glance at the newspaper.

"Yes, what about her?"

"She is my girlfriend. Oh sorry, she used to be my girlfriend."

"What do you mean, Douglas? You're confusing me."

"I'm damn serious. The girl was mine," Douglas said seriously.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Nancy used to be my girlfriend until they snatched her away from me."

"What exactly happened?" Kenneth asked.

"I met Nancy when I joined the University of Nairobi last year. She was my classmate and she was my first friend at the university. We got to like each other and we fell in love before long."

"Who is this Nancy, I mean what is her background?"

"Do you know Professor Edward Waihenya?" Douglas asked. Kenneth nodded. And then, to a most attentive audience Douglas poured out his heart. He told him of how they met fled, to Namibia and were eventually brutally separated. He started sobbing.

"Don't shed tears Douglas, cool the steam. Please, don't let the memory overwhelm you," Kenneth said.

"That was the last time I saw her. I'm learning from this paper that she is the wife of the American tycoon," Douglas said.

"I never knew that you had such adventures. Why didn't you tell me these things? That means you actually don't deserve to be here if the rape charge was a frame up," Kenneth said.

"Man is unfair but God can't be deceived. God knows how man has subverted justice to suit his own selfish goals. I may be languishing here in Lang'ata Prison but I'm confident God is with me. He cares for me and he'll punish the offenders on my behalf. I've a great hope burning in me that He'll pave the way for me to be a successful man in life."

Kenneth could see that he was like one meditating through speech.

"I'm sorry for your predicament, Douglas. I always sympathise with those who go to prison when they're actually innocent. You know sometimes, I think that I was just trying to clean the society of its evils and should therefore be rewarded rather than being dumped in jail," Kenneth said.

"But you told me that you actually chopped off that man's hands. Should you really consider yourself innocent when you actually did it?" Douglas asked.

"The circumstances that led to the act are what one should look at. Look here, man. One morning I went to that village tycoon and asked him to employ me on his farm. I was desperately in need of money as I had just left school and the man knew it. He employed me alright but he refused to pay me the standard rate, choosing to give me a meagre salary just because I was desperate. To add insult to injury, he never paid me on time, he delayed the money for a week, probably so that I could continue suffering. Everytime I went to remind him about my pay, he would tell me that he had no money and that I should check the following day. I was angered by this as I could see his wife giving the dogs cooked meat everyday while I didn't have anything to eat," Kenneth said.

"So you attacked him with a sword?" Douglas asked.

"Well, I actually didn't mean it. I was just overcome by anger. I went to the man's home one day and found that he was about to get into his Mercedes Benz, to drive away to his place of work. By the way, he is a director of three companies. I told him that I had come for my pay and he gave me a cold face. He then asked me why I was disturbing him so early in the morning when he didn't owe me a billion shillings, just a hundred shillings which as he said, could not even buy breakfast for his dogs. Anger welled up in me and I jumped at him without further thoughts. I pinned him to the ground with a kick in the groin. I can't tell how he got up and rushed to the Benz but he came back brandishing a sword. When he rushed at me with it, I threw a heavy kick that got him in the face and the sword fell down. I took it and chopped off his hands, intending to kill him."

"And that earned you the seven years in," Douglas ended.

"Don't you think I'm innocent in a way?" Kenneth asked.

"There is sense in what you say but the law of the land doesn't understand such sense. I actually fail to understand why the man had failed to pay you if he could afford to feed his dogs lavishly everyday and drive a Mercedes Benz. You're just somewhat justified in getting angry at his arrogance, but perhaps the law expects you to restrain yourself from slashing his hands and report the matter to the police," Douglas said.

"I still believe the bastard deserved it. Like all other rich people, he thought that I was a second class human being just because I was poor. He thought that he could oppress me just because I couldn't afford to seek justice in court. By the way, prison is for the poor. Rich men will always corrupt their way out. So I had to show him that I could deal with him without going to court where he could give the prosecutor and the judge money to be set free. Don't you know that even politicians have eroded justice in this country? He could also have talked to a politician friend of his and told him that there was a poor boy somewhere who was disturbing him by taking him to court for not paying his salary. It would just have cost the politician a telephone call and the next day the file of the case would be declared missing," Kenneth said.

"Don't worry," Douglas said, "There is still room for hope. I'm confident that God will one day touch the heart of men so that they can treat each other well, regardless of their social and economic status. It will be an era of justice and love for humanity."

"I like your optimism, Douglas," Kenneth said. "To be frank, I've never come across a man of your kind. You're suffering and yet you aren't bitter. One would expect you to launch a scathing indictment on the status quo."

"It doesn't help to be irrational just because one is suffering. That is why I still love Nancy for I know she was deceived. They convinced her that I had betrayed her by raping another woman and they staged the scene so well that anybody could have believed it."

"What are you intending to do now?" Kenneth asked.

Douglas remained silent for a long spell during which he just looked at Kenneth. Kenneth could not be fooled into believing that Douglas was backing him. He could see that he was far away in deep thoughts.

"I'll expose the truth to the world," Douglas said finally, new energy radiating in him.

"How will you do that while in prison?" Kenneth asked.

"I'll write a book and narrate everything that has happened. I can't let them think that they have won."

"You'll write a book about it?" Kenneth asked; visibly surprised.

"Yes, I'll do that. The world must know the truth."

The following day, Douglas wrote a note and sneaked it out of prison through one of the guards to be posted to Nathaniel. In it Douglas was informing him of his desire to write a book which would expose the truth about Mathews' marriage to Nancy. In the book, he would write an account of his life from childhood, an account of Nancy's life from childhood as Nancy had told him, and an account of how he and Nancy had become lovers. He would also give an account of how the American had come to admire Nancy and how her father had connived with the American to snatch her from him. He even told Nathaniel the title which he intended to give the book. It was to be entitled '*The Girl was Mine*'.

Douglas now felt more confident than ever before. Since sharing his secret with Kenneth the previous day, he felt that the issue of Nancy no longer troubled him like it had before. Kenneth had also talked much about his experiences and Douglas could not help sympathising with him. It was this feeling that he was not the only one who was suffering made Douglas begin to get more confident. He felt now that he was just a member of a group that was oppressed by another. And he felt more confident that the suffering would not be forever.

Eight days after Douglas wrote the note, Nathaniel paid him a visit in the prison. He was impressed by Douglas' idea of writing a book and he offered to have it published by his publishing company. He also promised to give Douglas all the help he would need in the process of writing the book. He began by giving him three pens and a rim of fullscaps on which to write.

That very day, when Douglas got in his cell after spending the day clearing a forest, he began writing the book.

Douglas wrote as many pages as possible every night before the prison lights were switched off at midnight. He had never written a novel before and he felt that it was a big challenge to do so. However, as he wrote, he found that he was doing it with more ease than he would ever have imagined. Perhaps, it was because he was not writing fiction. The material kept on rolling from his memory and he transferred onto

paper with all the bitterness that was in him. As he wrote, more material kept on coming to his mind and before long he had no doubt that the book would be completed without much strain.

Nathaniel visited Douglas more frequently in the ensuing days. He brought him more pens and another rim of fullscaps. Nathaniel also, on all occasions gave Douglas money with which to bribe the cell guards so that they could stop harassing him demanding to know what he was writing. Douglas had realised the need to bribe them when one day during the weekly inspection, a guard had seen the fullscaps and the few pages of the book which he had already written. He had been curious to know what the material was about in the usual chest thumping way.

Douglas knew that it was not illegal for prisoners to engage in academic work in the prison as long as it was during their free time which was only when they were supposed to be sleeping but he did not want the guard to know that he was writing a book about a sensitive topic involving a powerful American and a senior Kenyan. So, when the guard demanded to know what he was writing he cheated him that he was only practising the art of composition writing as he hoped to join a journalism college after his prison term ended. He had then given him twenty shillings and the matter had been forgotten.

Douglas finished writing the first draft of the book within two months. He immediately began reading through the manuscript to edit it with a view of writing the final copy. He added more material, deleted some and restructured some parts. When he was through with that he wrote another clean copy of the book and gave it to Nathaniel when he came to visit.

Three weeks later Nathaniel came and told Douglas that he was happy with the quality of the book and that after going through it, he had found it publishable. Nathaniel assured him that he would make sure it was published in the next six months, a record time as most books took an average of a year.

Douglas was overjoyed. He was overjoyed that the world would at last know the truth and that by the time the book would be published, he would have left jail because he only had four months left. As Nathaniel

left the prison, Douglas went back to his cell a happy man. Perhaps he was not just happy because his novel would be published. He was happy that Nancy would read it. The last sentence of the book would let her know of his feelings towards her. He had written it from deep within him and he knew it would remain embedded in his mind for ever: "That is how Nancy was snatched away from me but I still love her from the secret depth of my heart."

* * * * *

When 'The Girl was Mine' was published it took the literary and political world by storm. It became an instant best seller in Kenya and the first three thousand copies ran out from the book stores in the first two weeks. When the book was launched in America and Europe, it was a best seller. Many copies were sold all over the world in the first weeks and it maintained the lead as a best seller.

Overnight, Douglas Kamau became a hero in the literary world. He had been out of prison for two months and had gone back to Witeithie Village where he supported his mother financially using the money he got from writing articles to the *Nation*.

Douglas suddenly found himself a millionaire. The sale of the book was in millions and soon the book won the prestigious Book of The Year award. That earned him a further one million shillings and made the book sell even faster.

Literature aside, the book sent ripples throughout the world and people wondered how people could be so inhuman as to callously separate two lovers. Everybody, both in America and other parts of the world, was unanimous in the verdict that Mathews and Edward were morally unfit to be role models. Their reputations suddenly plummeted to very low levels.

Nancy pounced on the book the very first day it hit the American market. She had earlier read a review in the *New York Times* and had waited eagerly for her copy.

Now that she had it, she quickly locked herself in their bedroom in Atlanta and read the three hundred and twenty pages of the book non-

stop. When she finished reading it, she burst into tears and cried until her eyes were sore and full of pain.

Nancy read the last sentence. She read it many times until it became embedded in her mind and her eyes remained gazing at it without seeing it. Nancy knew that she had to go back to Douglas, even if it was only to tell him that she was sorry for what she had done to him.

Nancy closed the book, took her handbag, and got out of the room. She got out of the house and did not even lock the door. She did not care about anything for she knew that it would be her last day in the house.

She instructed her driver to take her to the airport and before long her limousine was burning the miles to the airport. She then took the next flight to Nairobi.

* * * * *

When Nancy touched down at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, she took a taxi immediately and directed the driver to take her to Witeithie village.

Once there she walked straight to Douglas' home and knocked twice on the door. A strange woman opened the door and spoke to Nancy.

"Can I help you please?" the woman asked looking at Nancy from head to toe.

"Is this where Douglas Kamau lives?" Nancy asked politely.

"He used to live here with his mother but they moved out last week, the woman said.

"Where did they go?" Nancy asked curiously.

"They went to live in Nairobi," the woman answered.

"Where in Nairobi?"

"I don't know but perhaps we can ask someone who knows. Wait for me here and I'll look for a person who can tell you the exact place where they went," the woman offered.

"Thank you, I'll appreciate your help," Nancy said.

The woman went a short distance away and was hidden by the crowded houses. She came back a few minutes later accompanied by a young man.

"This young man can help you," the woman said to Nancy.

"Good morning," Nancy greeted.

"Good morning to you. I was told that you want to see Douglas."

"Yes, but I've found that he has moved. I'll be happy if you direct me to where he is living in Nairobi," Nancy said.

"He's staying in Lavington. His house is number 38 on Woodvale Court," the man said.

"Thank you very much," Nancy said.

She gave the young man and woman a hundred shillings each and left Witeithie village. She walked to Ngong town and took a taxi to Lavington.

At the estate, Nancy went straight to house number 38. She told the gate attendant that she wanted to see Douglas and the man let her in.

Nancy saw a black Mercedes Benz in the garage as she walked to the mansion's door. She stopped at the door and pressed the bell. Then she waited impatiently but before long there came the sound of feet and the door flung open. Douglas stood at the door side.

"Nancy!" Douglas exclaimed in excitement and rushed out to embrace her.

Nancy began to cry and her tears streamed down on Douglas' hands.

"Stop crying Nancy. Please stop it. I love you more than ever before. I've always loved you," Douglas said emotionally.

"I betrayed you, Douglas. I betrayed you," Nancy stuttered in anguish as more tears streamed down.

Nancy was now breathing heavily.

"I've come to say that I'm sorry. Forgive me, Douglas. Please forgive me. I'm worthless and I just want you to do me one favour, please forgive me."

"Come on Nancy, let's get into the house," Douglas said.

He opened the door and led her inside while holding her hand. They got in and sat on a velvet sofa.

"Why do you feel that you betrayed me," he asked after a while.

"I ran away from you and went to Mathews," she said. "I kept thinking about you, Douglas, but I thought that it was real. I thought that it was true that you had done it," Nancy said.

"You aren't guilty. I'd have done the same if I were you. I know that they deceived you. They did it so well that anybody would have believed them," Douglas said.

"I'm sorry for the suffering you've gone through because of me. I'm really sorry," Nancy said.

"I'm not bitter. I don't hold you responsible. In fact, I feel triumphant and I'm glad for that. The suffering has made me understand the world better."

"You mean you're not bitter with me?" Nancy asked.

"I love you dearly and forever will," Douglas said.

He held her and embraced her. He kissed her passionately on the lips and they remained thus for a moment.

"I love you also, Douglas and I'll love you forever," Nancy said as she held him tightly.

"Let's forget the past and forge a new future. Let's forgive all those who caused us this suffering," Douglas said.

"I'm proud of you. I've never met a man like you," Nancy said as she kissed him on the lips.

Douglas held her close and felt her warmth and he caressed her whole body. Then he felt a sharp protrusion on her stomach and his heart skipped a beat. Nancy noticed his nervousness and she looked at him straight in the eyes.

"It is Mathews', I'm four month's pregnant," she said faintly.

Douglas kept silent as sweat began to form all over his body. He knew there would always be something to remind him of the past. That past he so badly wanted to forget.

THE GIRL WAS MINE

In *The Girl Was Mine*, Douglas Kamau struggles to keep Nancy Wanjia his girlfriend, but the prevailing forces almost cost him his life. Whether or not Douglas emerges victorious is the ultimate question. The world favours rich tycoons like Tim Matthews and makes them confident that they can have anything they want, even the love of an unwilling young woman. Nancy's father Waihenya will do anything for money and position.



Born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1971, David Karanja has been a journalist since graduating from the University of Nairobi with a Bachelor's degree in anthropology in 1995. He was a Sub-Editor at Nation Media Group from 2004 to 2008 and has written for newspapers in various countries. He is currently a Senior Editor at Aidspan, a Nairobi based international NGO which is an independent watchdog of the Global Fund to Fight Aids, TB and Malaria.

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